The Entrepreneur:

Elements That Affect Her Journey

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Abstract

This thesis described an exploratory study of four Canadian women entrepreneurs that can help educators and entrepreneurs increase their knowledge of the entrepreneurial phenomenon. The use of a metaphor rendered the phenomenon more meaningful. Based on observations, interviews, and archival collections, this research examined whether a combination of four personal elements played a role in the entrepreneurial journey. The principal result was that the personal elements were part of a larger, holistic picture that also included contextual and operational elements. The personal elements were found to be particularly vital to an individual at the beginning of the journey, while the contextual elements were more important to the entrepreneur as she continued on the journey. Furthermore, it was discovered that the operational elements were crucial to the entrepreneur's decision to continue the journey or to terminate it.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

> Watching the world change before your eyes is exhilarating...The pace of change has accelerated, and our world is changing rapidly.
>
> Nuala Beck, 1995, p. 1.

As the New Economy unfolds in the final years of this century, entrepreneurs are at the forefront of change. The restructuring of the workforce has led many people to choose entrepreneurship as an alternative to employment in a shrinking job market. In fact, according to Hisrich and Peters (1992), "we are living in the age of the entrepreneur" (p. 18). This entrepreneurial phenomenon affects how educators prepare students to meet the demands of the New Economy that will usher us into the new millenium. Hisrich and Peters stressed that "entrepreneurial education has never been so important in terms of courses and academic research" (p. 18). Yet educators realize that their knowledge of the entrepreneurial phenomenon is limited. For example, trainers may be developing courses on why and how to begin a new enterprise, but may not recognize the individual factors, or elements, that are crucial to the person who is preparing to embark upon an entrepreneurial journey. This study is an exploration of four entrepreneurial journeys, undertaken to add to the knowledge about the elements that affect the entrepreneurial venture.

Background to the Study

Researchers have explored a variety of personal elements that seem to be part of the entrepreneurial phenomenon. Robinson, Simpson, Huefner, and Hunt (1991) maintained that the two most popular elements studied were personality traits and

sociological conditions. Researchers such as Kee and Chye (1993) suggested that certain attitudinal characteristics were important contributors to entrepreneurship, while others, such as Herron (1994), argued that certain skill sets were necessary for the new venturer. In short, this entrepreneurial phenomenon has been associated with at least four different sets of personal factors: skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions.

Currently there is an increased emphasis on skill building for the workplace. Foote and Venne (1993) indicated that there will be a "boom in adult education as the new information society transforms people into 'lifelong learners'" (p. 82) who will be changing careers and upgrading in fast-changing fields. Some of these adults will become entrepreneurs and thus need specialized education. Co-op Programs at the Ontario high school level involve students choosing to participate for one term in a workplace of their choice for which they receive a high school credit. The co-op program is somewhat generic in its link between business and education, with the assumption that students could choose to work in an entrepreneurial enterprise. More specifically, an *Entrepreneurship Studies* (1990) program is incorporated as part of the Business Studies Program in Ontario Secondary Schools. In fact, Regulation 297 of the Revised Regulations of Ontario, 1990, (*Ontario Teacher's Qualification Regulation)* requires extra teaching qualifications in Entrepreneurship Studies.

To facilitate training students in entrepreneurship, more research is required. Initially, the qualitative study reported in this document set out to learn about the part played by a combination of specific skills, attitudes, personality traits, and social conditions in the success of a new venture. However, after reviewing four Canadian female entrepreneurs' answers to several open-ended questions, the investigation took a

different turn. Their stories were more about taking an entrepreneurial journey than about success. Consequently, the results of the study concentrated on a metaphorical journey of these businesswomen.

Purpose of the Study

A phenomenological paradigm was designed to explore personal elements associated with the entrepreneur. The initial purpose of this study was to investigate how a fusion of skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions could affect entrepreneurial success. However, the purpose of the investigation evolved into an exploration of the role played by the combination of these personal elements in the entrepreneurial journey. Later the in-depth analysis revealed that these personal elements joined forces with contextual and operational elements to play a major role in the entrepreneurial journey. Thus the emergent design led to four general questions that formed the framework for organizing the results:

1. What does a day in the life of an entrepreneur look like?
2. What personal elements are associated with an individual on an entrepreneurial journey?
3. What contextual elements are associated with an individual on an entrepreneurial journey?
4. What operational elements are associated with an individual on an entrepreneurial journey?

These questions were explored with the help of four southern Ontario women, whose entrepreneurial businesses varied in size and type. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and portfolio collections.

Significance of the Study

Entrepreneurship has grown at an unprecedented rate this decade. Massive corporate downsizing and re-engineering have forced laid-off employees to create their own jobs. For example, in the summer of 1995, "the number of self-employed Canadians (15.2% of working Canadians) surpassed the number of government-paid workers (14.6%). Only 19 years ago 18.8% of Canada's workers worked for the government and 10.9% were self-employed" (Onstad, 1996, p. 32). Corporate downsizing has also affected many graduates. For example, in the summer of 1990, there were 58,000 unemployed graduates; that figure rose to 151,000 six years later. A. L. Flood, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of CIBC, suggested that "one alternative to the youth unemployment challenge [is] the young entrepreneur" (1996, p. 40). In short, some of Canada's workforce is choosing to journey into entrepreneurial ventures. Indeed, *Canadian Business* reported that "small businesses and start-ups are the engine of the economy right now" (Onstad, 1996, p. 39).

This study identified personal elements that may lead an individual to begin an entrepreneurial journey. Results indicated that, in addition to certain personal elements, specific contextual and operational elements also affect the journey. These results could be useful both to an entrepreneur who may be reassessing the journey, and to an aspiring entrepreneur who may be considering embarking upon such a journey.

The results of the study could also benefit trainers involved in adult or career education. Educators understand that the world is changing; Beck (1995) suggested that "most [educators] are anxious to come to terms with it" (p. 8). Increased entrepreneurial activity indicates that educators need to design programs that will enable entrepreneurs to

translate creative ideas into profitable businesses. To design these learning opportunities, facilitators must first understand the combination of personal, contextual, and operational elements that could influence the entrepreneurial journey. Thus this three-pronged approach serves to advance the knowledge of educators and entrepreneurs alike who seek to understand the New Economy in the next millenium.

The Search: Early Prompting

The initial search for understanding personal elements involved in the entrepreneurial journey arose from personal experience with such ventures. Currently I am a part-time freelance businesswoman while continuing studies in education.

As an elementary student, I was the only female paper deliverer in the area. I learned that persistence led to additional customers and increased profits. As a teenager, I continued my entrepreneurial journey by running a babysitting service where I learned that good customer service meant repeat business.

As an adult, I combined an interest in education with an interest in the entrepreneurial venture as part of a staff that opened a private school. The challenge to provide excellent education for the students, while paying teachers' salaries, rental of a facility, and additional expenses, was exhilarating.

After leaving the private school and subsequently completing my undergraduate degree, I realized how drawn I was to the entrepreneurial venture. I read new venture stories in magazines such as *Success* and *Entrepreneur*, and considered opening a full-time tutoring business. But an overwhelming desire to continue my journey in learning led me to return to school as a graduate student in education.

In a Gender Issues course I learned about female victimization and male oppression through authors such as Carol Gilligan and Adrienne Rich. It was somewhat depressing to be a woman in that course, wondering if there was any hope for the working female population. At the same time, the media was filled with the efforts of such highly prosperous new venturers as fashion designer Donna Karan, lifestyle entrepreneur Martha Stewart, and Body Shop franchiser Anita Roddick. Furthermore, in *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*, Helgesen (1995) described businesswomen who had achieved success in their respective journeys. An entrepreneur who was supporting her family was introduced to me. She encouraged me to accept freelance jobs, and to my amazement, I had to refuse work to continue with my courses. It was turning out to be interesting and optimistic to be a female entrepreneur now.

When I began to research the entrepreneurial phenomenon I soon learned that a partnership had been formed between business and education to prepare students for the work world. This work world included entrepreneurs. High schools and colleges in the area were offering entrepreneurial studies to students who wanted to learn specifically about starting their own new ventures, not just about business in general. Thus the educational world was becoming increasingly interested in the entrepreneurial world.

Combining my interests in education, women, and entrepreneurship led to a thesis topic that would explore female entrepreneurship. The initial question asked, "What combination of personal elements lead to entrepreneurial success?" While participants would all be women, definitions for both "success" and "entrepreneur" had to be delineated to know who would qualify as a "successful entrepreneur." Multiple definitions for entrepreneur exist in the literature, some of which I include in Chapter 2.

Defining success for an entrepreneur proved difficult because people measure success differently. A "successful entrepreneur" was defined for this study as someone who had turned an idea into a viable business, and maintained the enterprise for at least one year. Finally, to generate specific questions about the elements, I defined "personal elements" as skills, attitudinal characteristics, personality traits, and sociological conditions.

After listening carefully to what the participants disclosed, it was clear that the focus of the exploration was really about taking an entrepreneurial journey, not about success. The analysis also revealed that, in addition to personal elements, contextual and operational elements were important to the metaphorical journey. Contextual elements referred to those aspects of the journey by which the women derived a sense of meaning about their entrepreneurial experience. Operational elements designated the specific items pertaining to the running of the chosen business. Thus, the framework for the study focused on three elements: the personal, the contextual, and the operational.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the question being considered. Chapter 2 provides a literature review, examining types of skills, attitudinal characteristics, personality traits, and sociological conditions relative to entrepreneurship. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes this study with a summary of the research, a discussion of the findings, implications for theory and for education, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study began as a somewhat narrow exploration of the combination of personal elements that played a part in entrepreneurial success. However, the focus shifted to incorporate a broader exploration of the role that this combination had in the entrepreneurial journey. Preliminary research revolved around defining "entrepreneur," which led to the discovery that each discipline provided its own explanation of the term. From these diverse definitions, four personal aspects of the entrepreneur emerged: 1) personal skills; 2) attitudinal characteristics; 3) personality traits; and 4) sociological conditions. Discussion of these four elements follows an overview of various definitions of the entrepreneur.

Definition of Entrepreneur

There was no universally standard definition found for entrepreneur. Indeed, "a precise definition can be elusive" (Stevenson & Gumpert, 1991, p. 9). The term "entrepreneur" originated from the French "entreprendre," meaning, "to undertake" (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 1992, p. 3). However, the definition for entrepreneur seemed to vary according to the writer's field of expertise.

The following were samples of the copious definitions for "entrepreneur": Schumpeter (1934), an early but still influential economist, defined entrepreneur as an innovator who develops untried technology, and he emphasized "the product and marketing aspects of entrepreneurial innovation" (Ise, 1994, p. 42). Manimala (1993), an enterprise development researcher, added "innovative organization" to Schumpeter's innovative product and marketing aspects. Nystrom (1993), a marketing expert, defined the entrepreneur as a manager of radical change, "a visionary activist, a Schumpeterian

change agent, who creates vision by action and forcefully enacts his vision by constructively handling the often conflicting demands of the emerging situation" (p. 237). Jurcova (1996), a psychologist, depicted the entrepreneur as a free, self-confident person who considered "persistence, creativity, self-confidence, and decisiveness as most important" (p. 140). Finally, Reynolds (1991), a sociologist, described entrepreneurs as having a "post-secondary education, in their late thirties, and with an established career record" (p. 63).

Clearly there was no simple definition for entrepreneur. However, a synthesis of various definitions supported a trans-disciplinary notion of the entrepreneur as an individual who has specific skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions. To this end, this review of entrepreneurial literature explored these four personal elements in relation to their contribution to the entrepreneurial phenomenon.

Personal Skills

It seemed reasonable to suggest that a person who begins an entrepreneurial journey must possess certain skills. That is, such an individual must have a group of abilities, some natural and some learned.

Herron (1994) found that, prior to the 1990s, little research on skills existed in entrepreneurial literature. He had to review different literature to investigate the skills that could pertain to the entrepreneur. In the strategy implementation literature on matching managers to jobs, Herron discovered a conceptual framework of skills pertaining to good management. Katz (1974) proposed a relationship between successful managers and three groups of skills: technical skill, human skill, and administrative skill. Szilagyi and Schweiger (1984) offered a more comprehensive framework of Katz'

proposal by subdividing his three groups into seven specific skills: technical product/service skill, technical business skill, technical industry skill, leadership skill, networking skill, administrative skill, and entrepreneurial skill. However, little validation existed for either Katz' or Szilagyi and Schweiger's proposals in the strategy implementation literature.

In his investigation, Herron (1994) integrated the strategy implementation literature and the entrepreneurial literature. He believed that the strategy implementation literature indicated that performance in implementing "formulated strategy will affect performance of the firm . . . [and that] this is also true, of course, for new ventures as well" (p. 33). To test Szilagyi and Schweiger's (1984) theory, Herron tested the seven skills with 132 Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) who had founded their own companies. Results from 132 returned questionnaires indicated very strong support for technical business skill, entrepreneurial skill, and administrative skill; strong support for technical industry skill and networking skill; and moderate support for technical product/service skill and leadership skill. He found that entrepreneurial success was grounded in the integration of personality traits with other variables, such as personal skills. In other words, his study indicated that there was more to entrepreneurial success than entrepreneurial personality. Indeed, his study was the first work to support the claim that personal skills are important for success in the new venture. In short, his empirical evidence was seminal to understanding the multiple dimensions and the integration of variables, such as personality and skills, for success as a new venturer.

At the same time Heron (1994) was making his breakthrough, other researchers were also looking at skills in a more simplistic approach than had Herron. Nystrom

(1993) stressed technical and administrative skills. Abetti (1993) and Manimala (1993) each emphasized human skills. Altink and Born (1993) stressed leadership skills. In 1996, Jurcova published his complex, multi-dimensional findings on skills, attitudes, and character traits of 56 Slovakian entrepreneurs, all university educated, with a mean age of 40. His initial opinion survey of the 56 people had placed knowledge and experience (i.e., technical skills) and social relationships (i.e., people skills) at the top of the list. However, when asked what they considered to be most important, the entrepreneurs themselves chose traits and attitudes over skills. In addition, half of the entrepreneurs acknowledged the advantage of working with a team, but one third of them preferred working alone. Jurcova concluded that skills were necessary for success, but the entrepreneurs underestimated their importance. He suggested that this underestimation "indicates possible ways of development of entrepreneurial attitudes through education" (p. 140). In other words, because skills were found to be important, we now have a window of opportunity for the educator.

The recent date of the studies described in the last three paragraphs indicates that the investigation of skills related to the entrepreneurial journey is currently in the initial exploratory stage. This point appears to have been one of Herron's (1994) concerns. He indicated that many more complicated interactions need to be researched, such as the levels and types of technology that may have an impact on technical product/service skills, and the role of specific industry knowledge versus the ability to assimilate new knowledge.

Attitudinal Characteristics

In conjunction with skill sets, the literature also associated certain attitudes with the entrepreneur. In broad terms, "attitude" was defined as "the predisposition to respond in a generally favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to the object of the attitude" (Robinson et al., 1991, p. 17). Here the object of the attitude was the entrepreneurial setting. More specifically, the term "attitudinal characteristics" included references to behaviours or attitudes. Robinson et al. explained that attitudinal characteristics were not necessarily inborn, because they were "open to change, [and therefore] may be influenced by educators and practitioners" (p. 24).

Studies regarding specific attitudinal characteristics existed in the entrepreneurial literature. Hornaday (1982) listed 42 characteristics attributed to entrepreneurs in the *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*. Timmons, Smollen, and Dingee (1985) suggested 15 behaviours that were desirable and learnable for entrepreneurs. The Ontario Ministry of Education (1990) listed 13 characteristics in their curriculum guideline for Entrepreneurship. Frequently studied attitudinal characteristics--hereafter referred to as "attitudes--that were linked to the entrepreneur included need for achievement, internal personal control, moderate propensity for risk-taking, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, determination, and drive (Herron, 1994; Kee & Chye, 1993). This brief outline indicates that the results were conflicting about whether or not certain attitudes were crucial to entrepreneurial success. In spite of the conflicting results, certain attitudes did emerge as having some relevance to the entrepreneurial journey.

Need for achievement. People with a high need for achievement set challenging goals for themselves and are only satisfied when they meet these goals. McClelland

(1961) determined that need for achievement was a necessary attitude for entrepreneurs. Hornaday and Aboud (1971) confirmed McClelland's results, as did Begley and Boyd (1987). However, Sexton and Bowman (1983) did not concur. Furthermore, Herron (1994) discredited McClelland's findings because McClelland's definition of entrepreneur was so broad that he included managers within large corporations. There was confusion, then, whether or not a link existed between the entrepreneur and high need for achievement.

Personal control. People who perceive control over their own destiny through their own efforts possess personal control. Anderson (1977), Shapero (1975), and Brockhaus (1980) each found a relationship between personal control and entrepreneurs. However, Begley and Boyd (1987) did not confirm the relationship between personal control and entrepreneurs. Yet Herron (1994) observed that Brockhaus' longitudinal study of entrepreneurs concluded that personal control was associated with the successful new venturer, but that there was a point at which personal control might be destructive and lead to a failed venture. In short, these studies implied that, generally, personal control may be related to being a successful entrepreneur, but there may be a point at which personal control is destructive. Again, it was not clearly confirmed what the connection was between locus of control and the entrepreneur, or whether there was even a link.

Propensity for risk-taking. Individuals who take a chance of encountering loss or harm are said to have a propensity for risk-taking. McClelland (1961) and Meyer, Walker, and Litwin (1961) found entrepreneurs to be moderate risk takers. However, Brockhaus (1980) and Sexton and Bowman (1983) argued that corporate managers and

the general population are also moderate risk-takers. While Begley and Boyd (1987) established that founders of firms scored significantly higher than non-founders in risk-taking propensity, Herron (1994) maintained that "risk-taking propensity predicted increased ROA [return on assets] up to a point but then, when increased further, predicted decreased ROA" (p. 20). Research has largely failed to confirm whether there is a link between risk-taking characteristics and entrepreneurs.

Ambiguity. Ambiguity occurs when people do not have enough information to control a situation (Kee & Chye, 1993). Since entrepreneurial venture is uncertain and constantly changing, Begley and Boyd (1987) posited that entrepreneurs should have a high tolerance for ambiguity. However, their results did not support their hypothesis. Hence, while it seemed reasonable to believe that entrepreneurs would have a high tolerance for ambiguities within the entrepreneurial journey, research in the 1980s did not confirm the supposition.

Self-confidence, determination, and drive. People who believe in their own abilities possess self-confidence. Determined individuals will persist or persevere to achieve their goals. People with drive have a strong inner motivation to try harder. Research sometimes considered these three attitudes together. For example, a major study conducted over two decades ago by Hornaday and Aboud (1971) concluded that these three attitudes characterized entrepreneurs. Herron (1994) argued that their study "did not attempt to connect these characteristics with new venture performance" (p. 22), and wanted to confirm a link between these three attitudes and entrepreneurial success.

Attitudinal clusters. Kee and Chye (1993) tested need for achievement, personal control, propensity for risk-taking, ambiguity, self-confidence, determination, and drive

with 134 futures traders at the Singapore International Monetary Exchange (SIMEX). These individuals were considered entrepreneurs because they operated one-person enterprises. Kee and Chye's objective was to identify crucial attitudes associated with entrepreneurs. Results were as follows: traders possessed personal control, a high need for achievement, and strong determination and drive, but they took moderate risks. They had a low tolerance for ambiguity, presumably because the Exchange was highly structured. These results implied that the trader, "like other entrepreneurs, . . . prefers to set his own goals and is driven by his need for achievement to attain these goals through his own efforts ...[and that] an entrepreneur takes calculated risks, thereby exercising his risk-management skills" (p. 64). The traders themselves identified self-discipline, determination and drive, self-confidence, risk-taking propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, and need for achievement (in that order) as predictors of success. Self-discipline was perceived to be important in a pilot study, but data indicated that all traders did not possess self-discipline. Statistics also disclosed that not all traders had self-confidence, although it was perceived necessary by the traders. Finally, Kee and Chye compared successful traders (i.e., those still trading) with less successful traders (i.e., those who had left SIMEX). Analysis indicated that need for achievement, determination and drive, and tolerance for ambiguity was high for the successful group. On the basis of these results, they argued that successful entrepreneurs were not distinguished by their personal control or risk-taking propensity, nor were they more self-confident or self-disciplined. Rather, the results suggested that successful entrepreneurs had a higher need for achievement, more determination and drive, and higher tolerance for ambiguity than their counterparts.

Kee and Chye concluded that those attitudes that best predict success in an entrepreneurial journey include tolerance for ambiguity, determination, and drive.

Kee and Chye's (1993) use of the term "determination and drive" is similar to Garud and Van de Ven's (1992) definition of persistence. These researchers tested tolerance for ambiguity and persistence in entrepreneurs within an internal corporate venture, which they tracked for 12 years. They posited that this venture was analogous to entrepreneurial ventures because it was "characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity" (p. 93). Results indicated that the expansion period showed ambiguity over choice of product, along with persistent behaviour on the part of the entrepreneur. Once the superior product clearly emerged, the ambiguity disappeared, and, with it, the persistent behaviour. However, as environmental changes again created ambiguity, the persistent behaviour on the part of the entrepreneurs returned. Garud and Van de Ven concluded that persistence was more likely to occur in the presence of ambiguity. Since Garud and Van de Ven indicated at the outset of their exploration that this venture was analogous to an entrepreneurial venture, their results supported Kee and Chye's findings.

The studies reported in the previous pages indicate that some empirical work has been done. However, Robinson et al., (1991) stated that this "represents some first steps toward a better understanding of the psychology of entrepreneurship using attitude models" (p. 24). While still in an exploratory phase, results seem to indicate that tolerance for ambiguity, determination, and drive are important attitudes to have if embarking on an entrepreneurial journey. Further research could delve into a broader range of entrepreneurial activities such as non-profit enterprises, intrapreneurship, and different industrial types. And, as Robinson et al. conclude, "the attitude model of

entrepreneurship . . . has ramifications for entrepreneurial education and change programs. Because attitudes are open to change, entrepreneurial attitudes may be influenced by educators and practitioners" (p. 24). In other words, trainers could help students acquire these attitudes before the onset of the entrepreneurial journey.

Personality Traits

In addition to specific skills and attitudes, studies also indicated that certain personality traits could be associated with the entrepreneur. Personality traits included qualities that made individuals distinctive and that provided them with an identity. According to Timmons, Smollen, and Dingee (1985), personality traits are not so learnable as perhaps attitudes and skills might be. Timmons et al. applied the psychologist's perspective to their work with entrepreneurs to justify their profile of entrepreneurial traits. Their study is "one of the most comprehensive approaches to understanding entrepreneurship to date" (Chell, Haworth, & Brearley, 1991, p. 46). Among the few not-so-learnable traits identified were creativity and innovation, which Schumpeter (1934) also stressed when he wrote: "the innovative role of the entrepreneur . . . emphasizes creative destruction, breaking old patterns and relationships and introducing new ones" (as cited in Nystrom, 1993, p. 237). The literature indicated a link exits between both the creativity and the innovation traits and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, integrating the possible connection between the two traits and entrepreneurship with a popular personality theory (e.g. Jungian Psychology) may lead to a better understanding of how an individual could in fact develop these "not-so-learnable" traits prior to beginning the entrepreneurial journey, or "en route."

Creativity: A Personality Trait

Nystrom (1990) defined creativity broadly as "the result of active, directed thought" (p. 59). De Jordy (1992), an entrepreneur himself, defined creativity specifically in terms of the questions a creative person would ask when confronted with a problem: "If I do this, what will happen? If I do that, what will happen? What can I do to accomplish the desired response to this identified problem?" (p. 59) De Jordy suggested that creativity is hampered because society has taught individuals "that there is only one, or maybe two, solutions to a given problem [when] in fact, you can ask these questions dozens of times and come up with dozens of potential solutions" (p. 59). Thus, a person with a creative idea clearly has the potential to open a viable business and thus begin an entrepreneurial journey.

Nystrom (1993) described the creative process as a balancing act between two stages that "in practice are not clearly delineated or separate from each other, and there is much moving back and forth as part of the process" (p. 239). However, he described it as a two-part process to help us understand. Initially, Nystrom argued, a person creatively generated intuitive ideas "based on a wide range of inspiration from different sources" (p. 239), using flexible, divergent thinking, rapidly reassessing and reevaluating situations and change. Nystrom (1990) described the second part of the process as "basically analytical, and characterized by convergent thinking and formalized analysis" (p. 61). Focused thought allows for more precise evaluation and communication of the creative ideas to others, once ready to implement them. Nystrom (1993) concluded that the entrepreneur is a "visionary activist [who utilizes] visions and wholistic images . . . as the

main guiding forces in creativity and entrepreneurship" (p. 237). In other words, Nystrom implied that there is a link between creativity and the entrepreneurial journey.

Jurcova (1996) observed in his study of 56 Slovakian entrepreneurs that, "one of the defining signs of entrepreneuring is creativity" (p. 134). Spontaneous responses to questions about their entrepreneurial journey included phrases such as "the need for creative activity; the need to pursue new ideas; the need to try something new; the need for a change; the impossibility of being creative enough" (p. 136). In his summary of results, Jurcova said, "In the entrepreneur's attitudes toward creativity we can see a strong emphasis on the need for creative activity, utilizing new ideas and fantasy. The need for . . . creativity is the main motive in the decision to begin entrepreneuring in half of the entrepreneurs" (p. 140). In short, Jurcova discovered that creativity seems to be an important trait for the new venturer.

A Dutch institute for small and medium-sized business firms sponsored the development of a rating scale for assessing behavioral characteristics of people beginning on their entrepreneurial journey. Altink and Born (1993) developed the rating scale after conducting three major studies with consultants for small business firms. Data indicated that creativity was an important personality trait, particularly for starting entrepreneurs.

It was no surprise to find current studies and rating scales supporting the notion that creativity is an important personality trait to someone on an entrepreneurial journey. After all, Schumpeter (1934), an early economist who still influences current economic thinking, described the entrepreneur as someone who breaks old patterns and relationships and introduces new ones (Nystrom, 1993). Over the decades researchers

have continued to support Schumpeter's hypothesis that there is a link between creativity and the entrepreneurial phenomenon.

Innovation: A Personality Trait

Nystrom (1990) defined innovation as "the process of bringing new ideas into use" (p. 5). Applying this definition to the entrepreneurial personality, Nystrom (1993) referred to the entrepreneur as "a visionary activist, a Schumpeterian change agent" (p. 237). Indeed, Schumpeter argued that "any form of entrepreneurship would involve some degree of innovation, however small that may be" (as cited in Manimala, 1992, p. 480).

Abetti (1993) studied how technical innovation and entrepreneurship could promote regional economic development through the creation of new ventures in Mexico, USA, and France. Abetti explained how previous studies had established that someone – often referred to as "the champion"--had to promote technological innovation. In Abetti's study, the champion was "an innovative 'social entrepreneur' who finds new ways for creating the infrastructure necessary to satisfy the need for regional economic development" (p. 131). Abetti's results indicated that when there was an innovative entrepreneur promoting the project, the infrastructure was completed, but without this innovator, the project either stalled or was transferred to a commercial developer. Abetti's results indicated a link between the innovative trait of the businessperson and the entrepreneurial journey, and between innovation and success.

Manimala (1992, 1993), influenced by Schumpeter's (1934) model of entrepreneurial action, accepted the early researcher's hypothesis that entrepreneurs are innovative. Manimala then developed a scale to measure and to categorize the

innovativeness of entrepreneurs. His 138 subjects were entrepreneurs whose stories had been published in business magazines. Results indicated that while all 138 were innovative, some were more innovative than others. It was also noted that the higher innovative scorers were more successful in their entrepreneurial journeys. From his findings, Manimala identified the "rules of thumb" that the more innovative personalities seemed to follow. A summary of these rules is in Appendix A. Manimala concluded with the suggestion that "practice of the innovator's rules may prove to be a short-cut to successful and innovative entrepreneurship" (p. 206). Manimala's study implied a connection between the innovative trait of the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial journey and between innovation and success.

Thus researchers embraced Schumpeter's (1934) notion that a connection exists between innovation and the entrepreneur. Recent studies took it a step beyond Schumpeter by developing rating scales for measuring levels of innovation to reveal policies that the more successful entrepreneur seemed to follow. While Timmons et al. (1985) labeled both creativity and innovation as "not-so-learnable" traits, Manimala's (1993) study suggested that, at least for innovation, there may be "rules of thumb" people could follow to develop these "not so learnable" traits as they either contemplate or continue their journey in entrepreneurship. A brief look at Jung's (1962) concept of personality also revealed that individuals may in fact be able to acquire certain personality traits.

Jung's Typology Theory of Personality

The following is a condensed outline of a portion of Carl Jung's Typology Theory of Personality (1962). It was his notion that people could develop those "not-so-

learnable" personality traits that Timmons et al. (1985) described. For an individual on an entrepreneurial journey, Jungian psychology could be the means of acquiring additional creativity and innovation because he believed it is possible to learn different personality traits.

Carl Jung identified a psychological function as "psychic activity that remains the same in principle under varying conditions" (1962, p. 436) and "by which consciousness obtains its orientation to experience" (1964, p. 61). In other words, these functions allow us to adapt and orient ourselves in the world. Jung profiled four functions: thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. He summarized their meaning as follows: "Sensation (i.e., sense perception) tells you that something exists; thinking tells you what it is; feeling tells you whether it is agreeable or not; and intuition tells you from whence it comes and where it is going" (1964, p. 61). While all four functions co-exist in each individual, usually one function dominates our personality, a second function is rarely used, and the other two functions fall somewhere in between. Jung believed that a person could restrain the more dominating function, and advance the other functions to some degree, to create a more balanced, mature, whole personality.

For the entrepreneur, there must be a balance between what Jung refers to as the thinking and intuition functions. This individual would embrace Jung's intuition function when inspired to create by ideas from many sources. The entrepreneur would then embrace Jung's thinking function to use convergent, analytical thought to activate, or innovate, the envisioned changes.

In summary, the literature implies that there could be a connection between the creative and innovative traits of individuals who set out on entrepreneurial journeys.

Creativity allows individuals to envision change and new ideas, while innovativeness allows them to think of how to activate the changes. Although Timmons et al. (1985) argued that these traits might not be learnable, educators should be interested in Jung's contention that people can mold their personality traits by refining dominant functions and developing weaker functions. In short, educators could integrate the development of both the creative and innovative traits into entrepreneurial studies.

Sociological Conditions

Within the literature, specific skills, attitudes, and personality traits have been associated with an individual on an entrepreneurial journey. Other scholars have suggested that existing sociological conditions could also affect one's decision to begin such a venture. While much of the entrepreneurial literature explored American demographics, this review examined four sociological circumstances from the Canadian perspective. The four conditions included childhood family background, education, age, and gender.

Childhood Family Background

Reuber's (1994) study examined whether the individual's background experience was associated with the individual who chose the entrepreneurial route. Background experience was defined as the individual who as a child observed "family members owning and operating businesses" (p. 26). Reuber surveyed 36 nominees for the 1993 Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award, all of whom had founded their own firm. Her results confirmed that childhood family background made a difference in the individual's entrepreneurial journey. While all of her subjects were successful in their entrepreneurial journey, those women who had had entrepreneurial parents currently

owned and operated firms with a higher sales growth than those women who had not had entrepreneurial parents. Reuber argued that watching family members run their own enterprise contributed to the overall experience of entrepreneurs.

There seemed to be a link between the Canadian entrepreneur's familial background and that individual's journey into entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial parents modeled the new venture experience for this individual, who in turn had increased commercial development. Since family background seemed to play a role in the entrepreneurial journey, it was reasonable to look at whether one's educational background influenced the entrepreneurial journey.

Educational Background

Reuber's (1994) study of 36 nominees for the 1993 Canadian Woman Entrepreneur also posited that there would be a correlation between the level of education attained by a person and the entrepreneurial experience. Indeed, Reynolds (1991) reported that, in the USA, those most likely to become entrepreneurs had post secondary school education. Furthermore, Rahim's (1996) report indicated that entrepreneurs were more educated in general than managers. Reuber's findings did not specifically confirm that Canadian entrepreneurs were most likely to hold a post secondary school education. However, she found that the amount of formal education was linked to the start-up size and number of employees at the beginning of the entrepreneurial journey. First, there was a negative relationship between education and firm size; that is, the more educated women started smaller firms. Reuber reasoned that this negative relationship "could be due to the propensity of more educated women to start professional service firms which are not likely to have any employees, besides the founder, at start-up" (p. 27). Second,

there was a positive relationship between education and additional products and services. Reuber reported that the more educated women introduced more new products and services.

A link seemed to exist between the Canadian individual's education and the entrepreneurial journey, although results differed slightly from the general literature regarding the entrepreneur's education. Perhaps Reuber's findings differed because she studied women, while much of the general literature included studies of either males only or of both genders. However, education appeared to influence the size of the Canadian entrepreneurial venture and the amount of products and services offered by the Canadian firm. Since there seemed to be a relationship between an individual's childhood and educational backgrounds and the entrepreneurial journey, it was logical to question whether other demographics, such as the age of the individual, may be predisposed to an entrepreneurial journey.

Age

This section explored possible links between beginning the entrepreneurial journey and the age of an individual. Onstad (1996) reported an increase in Canadians approximately 35 to 50 years old, once unemployed, beginning entrepreneurial journeys. Flood (1996) stated that there were an estimated 200,000 new ventures owned by young adults in Canada in 1996. Both Canadian reports confirmed the general literature regarding the age of beginning entrepreneurs. For example, Hisrich and Peters (1992) found that most people began their new venture between the ages of 22 and 55, which substantiated both Onstad's report and Flood's report. Bygrave (1994) concluded that the

typical founder of the 500 fastest-growing small companies, referred to as "Inc. 500," is 50 years old; this finding confirmed Onstad's study.

Two other facts of interest regarding age emerged in the general entrepreneurial literature, which may or may not prove true in Canada. First, there were milestone years at five-year intervals (i.e., 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50) when individuals were more inclined to start an entrepreneurial journey because it is "now or never". Second, males tended to start their main entrepreneurial journey in their early 30's, while females tended to start the venture in their mid 30's (Hisrich & Peters, 1992).

A relationship seemed to exist between the age of a Canadian and the onset of the entrepreneurial journey. The majority was between 22 and 55 years of age. Research may confirm that milestones exist for Canadian entrepreneurs, and that Canadian males start entrepreneurial ventures in their early 30's, while Canadian females start their ventures about five years later. While studies seemed to connect a Canadian's background and age to the entrepreneurial journey, Campbell (1994) indicated there was little information regarding a link between gender and the new Canadian venture.

Gender

The final sociological condition explored in relationship to the entrepreneurial journey was gender. In 1985 Canadian women owned 27 per cent of all small businesses, and growth in female self-employment was 5.8 per cent, compared to 2.8 per cent for males (Statistics Canada, 1988), echoing similar figures in American statistics (Anselm, 1994).

Belcourt (1990), a Canadian researcher, reported: "The entrepreneurial revolution is being fueled by women: women are creating businesses at three times the rate of men,

and four out of every ten businesses are started by women" (p. 435). In 1994, Campbell, another Canadian, argued that, while recent research indicated female entrepreneurs were a new phenomenon, "it would be more accurate to affirm that women's past economic contributions have not been fully or properly recorded" (p. 8). Furthermore, she contended, women were still not being counted, since many surveys continued to target growth-oriented, technology-based, full-time ventures. Perhaps she was right, since Anselm found that there is a "high concentration of women entrepreneurs in the service sector" (1994, p. 33). Statistics Canada reported that 2.2 million Canadians earned at least some money by creating their own work in 1994, and it was women who led the way. Canadian researchers Allen and Bandeen (1994) stated that "the rate of new business formation by women is three times that of men" (p. 91). Allen and Bandeen forecasted that one in three Canadian businesses "will be owned by women within this decade" (p. 91). These Canadian statistics indicate a strong association between the entrepreneur and gender. Women were at the forefront as individuals starting an entrepreneurial journey in the 1990s.

To summarize, sociological conditions have been cited as playing a role in the lives of Canadian entrepreneurs. A family history that included entrepreneurial parents was linked to higher sales growth when the individual chose the entrepreneurial route. Post secondary education seemed to affect the amount of products and services the beginning entrepreneur would offer as well as the size of the firm at the beginning of the journey. Research indicated that a Canadian was likely to begin the entrepreneurial journey between 22 and 50 years old. Research has not confirmed whether there are milestone years when Canadians choose the entrepreneurial route, nor has it confirmed

when the Canadian male and female begin the new venture. Finally, more females than males have begun their entrepreneurial journey in Canada, and women often start in the service industry.

Chapter Summary

Skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions emerged from the entrepreneurial literature as four major personal elements. While each component seemed to be one part of the entrepreneurial phenomenon, it was reasonable to suggest that a combination of all four elements would play a crucial role in an entrepreneurial journey. The subsequent chapter will present the methodology used in this study to explore the significance of the fusion of these individual components in four entrepreneurs' journeys.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to discover the role played by a combination of four personal elements in the entrepreneurial journey. Personal elements explored were skills, attitudinal characteristics, personality traits, and sociological conditions, all of which seemed to be part of the entrepreneurial experience. The design was qualitative, to foster an understanding of the new venture phenomenon. In this section, ethical considerations, limitations, delimitations, and methods of data collection and analysis are described.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted using the guidelines stated in Principles of Ethical Research with Human Participants, specified in the Brock University Faculty Handbook. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity. Each participant signed the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B) that outlined the parameters of the study, the purpose of the study, and the use of their responses as the data for the study. Brock University's Sub-Committee on Research with Human Participants approved this study and the Informed Consent Form.

Limitations and Delimitations

Before collecting and analyzing data, the boundaries of the exploration were determined. To avoid unnecessary distortion, these were the limitations, and delimitations of this study.

Limitations

For this particular design there were specific conditions attached that I had to be aware of prior to formulating the question. These conditions included:

1. The use of a semi-structured interview format means that more information may be collected from some people than others.
2. The semi-structured interview format requires a combination of deductive and inductive analysis.
3. The qualitative method of collecting and interpreting data is limited by the fact that "no investigator observes, interviews, or studies documents exactly like another" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 386).
4. The components within each of the elements do not constitute all there is to know about these themes.
5. Personal elements may not be the only contingencies affecting the entrepreneurial journey.
6. One day of observation and one interview for each participant provides only a snapshot of the experience, preventing long-term statements from being made.
7. The metaphor of the journey is only one metaphor that could have been chosen.

Delimitations

Conditions for choosing the participants, collecting the data, and design type were outlined once the purpose of the study was formulated. The specific terms for the research included:

1. The study was delimited to four successful female entrepreneurs in one town in southern Ontario.
2. Data were collected through observation, interview, and compilation of archival materials from each of the four entrepreneurs.
3. Data were collected within one month.
4. The study solely used qualitative techniques.

Design

The design followed a constructivist approach that explored how the four personal elements contributed to the way each woman established her entrepreneurial world. To gain a rich, meaningful understanding of how each participant constructed her business life, this study used qualitative methods of observation, interview, and collection of archival materials. The inherent characteristics of qualitative data facilitated a search for patterns in the lives of these four women on their respective entrepreneurial journeys.

Qualitative data is rich, "detailed descriptions of people and situations" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 387). To write descriptive details, "the researcher immerses her/himself in the setting" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1996, p. 4). Each of the four women in this study was observed for a day in her workplace to see her in the context of her specific work setting. This allowed time to capture little details of how each managed her day, how she acted, and how she reacted to the day's events.

Qualitative data may include participants' verbatim accounts about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts. Ely et al. (1996) indicated that qualitative research is "an interactive approach in which the persons studied teach the researcher about their lives" (p. 4). The qualitative method allowed for a humanistic approach to learn about the four women as individuals. In answering the open-ended questions, they described their experiences in their own words. The questions promoted a discussion of the social meanings they attached to the world around them, as well as an interpretation of how they viewed their specific domains. Thus the research questions fostered a

comprehensive appreciation for these entrepreneurs and their worlds, as seen through their respective lenses.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993) indicated that qualitative research could include the collection of artifacts, such as personal documents, official documents, and objects. For this study, each participant provided me with various materials that she had accumulated from the onset of her journey. Their collections provided graphic representations of some of their struggles and/or triumphs as they sought to construct their businesses.

Member checking is a strategy used to improve credibility of results in a qualitative study. Ely et al. (1996) warned the researcher to watch for "convergence of at least two pieces of data, for triangulation of findings" (p. 97). In other words, "check informally with participants for accuracy during data collection" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 87). In an endeavour to generate accurate descriptions, interpretations, and analysis of interactions and interviews, the transcribed audiotapes of the interviews were read and approved by the participants.

Participants in the Study

Interest in beginning an entrepreneurial journey on a full-time basis influenced my decision to learn more about the topic through in-depth interviews with women currently on their own journey. Helgesen's *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* (1995) about four American women, where she contrasted two entrepreneurs and two corporate businesswomen, illustrated that four participants was a workable number in qualitative research. Helgesen's book served as a guide for this study that compared two entrepreneurs who seek out clients and two entrepreneurs whose

customers come to them. In an issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* dedicated to Canadian women entrepreneurs, Campbell (1994) argued that "we need to consider the possibility that studies conducted in the United States may not be applicable in Canada" (p. 13). Furthermore, Campbell challenged, "we must work to . . . make women visible, as researchers, and as subjects of research [calling for] more research by women about women entrepreneurs" (p. 13). In response to Campbell's challenges, this exploration included Canadian women entrepreneurs within the Greater Toronto Area.

Diane, a freelance writer, was one of the women who sought out clients, and was an acquaintance of mine. Sandi, the second entrepreneur who had to solicit clients, was a cosmetic consultant in laser surgery and a sales representative for a collagen company. Amy, whose coffee shop I frequented, was one of the women whose customers came to her. Barbara, the other woman whose clients came to her shop, was a fabric storeowner. The Director of the Enterprise Centre in Halton-Peel region suggested both Sandi and Barbara as participants for this study.

Each entrepreneur was contacted by phone, at which time they were provided with an outline of the nature of the study and were invited to participate in a day of observation and an audiotaped interview. All four agreed to participate. Observation dates were confirmed for each of them at their workplace. They each signed a copy of the Informed Consent Form at the beginning of the observation day, thereby acknowledging their informed and voluntary consent to participate in the study and giving me permission to use the data collected. Separate interview dates were then confirmed for each participant. Prior to beginning the audiotaped interviews, they were

again given the parameters as outlined in the permission statement. The identity of each participant was protected by the use of pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Observations comprised the first set of data. For one day, each participant was observed at work. The broad framework for this data included the context, events, and the participant herself. For the context, a written description of the setting and a drawing of the layout of the workplace were included in fieldnotes. Events such as meetings, telephone calls, and general activities of each businesswoman were recorded. The entrepreneur's management style was recorded, and her actions were described. The participant's reactions to various events and activities were noted. Observing Diane, Amy, Barbara, and Sandi each for a day provided the opportunity to watch the phenomenon of entrepreneurship unfold. Initially it was difficult to be an unobtrusive observer. Each participant seemed to feel she had to chat to me or even entertain me. But as the day's events unrolled, each of these businesswoman became so involved in her job that she seemed to almost forget about the scrutiny she was under. After each observation, I transcribed my handwritten notes on to pages with numbered lines.

Personal interviews constituted the second set of data, and varied in length from one hour to one and one-half hours. All interviews were audiotaped with permission. The questions were in a semi-structured format. A list of open-ended questions concerning the role played by personal skills, attitudinal characteristics, personality traits, and sociological conditions in their entrepreneurial experiences were given to the participants beforehand (see Appendix C). They told their own stories in their own way as they formulated answers to the questions. This semi-structured format allowed each

participant more flexibility to take the discussion where she wanted it to go, often in a more personal way than anticipated. I transcribed the interviews verbatim on to pages with numbered lines for each participant and then had them read their own interviews. None of them asked for any portions of their responses to be omitted from the research.

A compilation of archival materials from their business portfolios comprised the third set of data. Items included pictures, brochures, newspaper clippings, advertisements, business cards, and newsletters. These portfolios provided a visual means of looking through their specific lenses at their respective entrepreneurial experiences. For example, Sandi's photo albums of pleased clients demonstrated the pride she took in her position as a cosmetic consultant. Some of the items were photocopied and kept in a locked filing cabinet, while others, such as photos, were returned.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase was a deductive examination. Based on the literature review, skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions surfaced as major subjective components that played a role in the entrepreneurial success. Within each of these components was a set of distinct characteristics. Initially, I wondered if a combination of these characteristics within the four main elements affected the success of an entrepreneur. A graphic representation of these specific characteristics was created in chart form (see Table 1). I referred to the initial question asked, "What combination of personal elements lead to entrepreneurial success?" I then organized, sorted, and identified the four personal elements and their distinctive patterns in the data. Coded labels were assigned to the elements and their

Table 1

Personal Elements That Play A Role in Entrepreneurial Success

Personal Element	Characteristics
Personal Skills	Technical Skill
	Human Skill
	Administrative Skill
Attitudinal Characteristics	Tolerance For Ambiguity
	Determination
	Drive
Personality Traits	Creativity
	Innovativeness
Sociological Factors	Childhood Family Background
	Educational Background
	Age
	Gender

characteristics (for example, see Table 2). The codes were written in the margins of the text beside "chunks" of data material that ranged in size from one short phrase to pages. These codes allowed me to link the fragments of ideas from each data set and to observe where they clustered into segments that related to a specific attribute. Page numbers for information "chunks" for each characteristic were then recorded for each participant on a chart (see Table 2).

Since deductive analysis seldom accounts for all of the data in qualitative designs, the second phase of analysis used the ethnographic method. This technique "is an inductive approach that analyzes the data from an initial set of specific observations and attempts to extract and identify general patterns of behavior shown by the subjects" (Pytlik, 1997, pp. 20-21). I looked for commonalities, differences, and new patterns of performance. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggested, I paid "much closer attention to the categories of expression that the informant actually [used]" (p. 40). Rather than looking at the data as a reply to the original question, I also paid "much closer attention to the content of the talk" (Coffey & Atkinson, p. 40). Clusters of similar data units were given new category labels. Contrasts within the data were made. The "exceptions, misfits and negative findings" (Coffey & Atkinson, p. 47) were noted as important data information for creating new codes. Categories were spliced and linked together differently. In other words, the data were re-sorted, re-formulated, re-clustered, and renamed to reflect each participant's perspective more closely. I compared and contrasted the views expressed by all four women to discover new themes and issues. The completed exploration revealed additional components important to the

Table 2

Example of Labels Used to Code Data in Deductive Analysis

Skills Codes	Amy	Barbara	Sandi	Diane
TP = understand design product/service	p.11, 13 28, 45	p. 3, 6 18, 8	p. 3, 4, 6 1,11, 12 13, 16 26	p. 1, 4, 2, 3, 5, 6 7, 35
TO = technical skill in designing or redesigning business	p. 46, 28	p. 31, 4, 5, 7, 11	p. 2,5, 16, 8, 9, 21	p. 8, 16, 18
TI = technical industry-- understanding & maneuvering in the industry	p. 31, 32, 51, 30, 33, 34	p.12, 17, 18, 23	p. 16, 20, 26	p. 6, 34, 4

entrepreneurial phenomenon. In brief, the categories emerging from the inductive analysis were contextual components, comprised of impetus for beginning the journey, personal control, outcomes of the journey, and sustainability of the journey; and operational components, comprised of hours of operation and need for employees, inventory, business site, and promotion of the business.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggested that "metaphorical imagery can provide a useful way of thinking about and interpreting textual data" (p. 85). It was during the second phase of analysis using the ethnographic method that it became clear how these women made sense of their own entrepreneurial experience. It was at this juncture that I began to perceive the new venture in terms of a metaphorical journey. It started to make sense now to ask a different question, "What was the role played by a combination of four personal elements in relation to the entrepreneurial journey?"

The emergence of the journey metaphor helped me find the meaning of being an entrepreneur within the data material. "Meaning" is defined by Mezirow (1991) as "an interpretation, and to make meaning is to construe or interpret experience--in other words to give it coherence" (p. 4). Mezirow argued that we could make sense of our experiences through language because language helps us construct our reality. Meaning is the key to qualitative methodology, to understand how the people constructed their daily lives. "Researchers who use this approach are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 3). At the heart of this qualitative study, then, was the discovery, through the use of a metaphor, of how these four women had created their entrepreneurial worlds in relation to personal, contextual, and operational elements.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the steps followed in conducting this qualitative study. Ethical considerations were considered first, ensuring that the individual's rights were respected. Limitations and Delimitations were outlined. Reasons for choosing the qualitative research design were explained. The process of choosing subjects was outlined, and participants were introduced. The data collection and analyses were described as a way of understanding and interpreting the entrepreneurial experiences of the four participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative study. The purpose of the study was to explore what combination of elements plays a role in the entrepreneurial journey. To better understand how the entrepreneurs constructed their business world, data sources included observation, interview, and collection of archival materials. The chapter begins with a description of each of the women and their worlds of work, followed by a presentation of personal elements from deductive analysis and of contextual and operational elements from inductive analysis.

Description of the Entrepreneurs

The observation allowed for a comprehensive description of a day in the life of an entrepreneur. Detailed notes were taken relative to events, actions, behaviours, and interactions by each of the participants. These notes shaped the following description of the individuals and the context of the study. Pseudonyms were given to each participant.

Case Study I: Amy

A year and a half ago, Amy bought a coffee shop franchise for nearly $400,000. I was a regular customer. When asked to join my study, she graciously accepted, and we set up a time when she would be "on line" serving customers.

At 6:00 on a dark morning, I parked my car and walked towards the glow of lights in the coffee shop. Amy, dressed in her uniform, looked up with a wave behind the counter, and greeted me with a cheerful, "Good morning!" The shop's faux-finished yellow walls and canvas paintings picked up the warmth of the lights. While she measured coffee beans, set up coffee urns, and started the dishwasher, she chatted

continually. When she opened at 7:00, regular customers arrived for take-out coffee and brief conversation before work. At 7:45 Jane, an employee, joined Amy on line.

The rest of the day, Amy was in perpetual motion clearing tables, straightening furniture, and serving customers. She greeted many people by name, and smiled at everyone. When asked, "How are you, Amy," she answered, "Wonderful!" She told me later, "They don't really want to know if your dog died this morning!" She bent down to greet children warmly, and often helped them. She told one child to "put one hand on the muffy and one on the plate" so he could carry his muffin. She genuinely cared for the seniors. She asked two seniors, "Now, do either of you gentlemen need a hand?" Her friendliness was contagious; many customers chatted to Amy, and often chatted to others.

At mid morning, Peter, another of her 11 employees, joined them on line where they chatted and worked as a team. Jane made excellent lattés and cappuccinos, and Amy enjoyed greeting the customers, so Jane worked the machine while Amy took customer orders. Peter did both, in addition to clearing tables.

Amy also squeezed in administrative duties, making brief telephone calls from the counter phone and writing job lists for herself and her employees. At noon she completed the bank deposit and took it to the bank, where tellers greeted her by name.

Amy's shift finished at 3:00 p. m., at which time she ate lunch. Rather than relax, she observed her staff as a team, noting what worked and what needed improvement.

Case Study II: Barbara

For three years, Barbara had owned a retail home fabric shop in this Southern Ontario town. The director of the Enterprise Centre suggested to me that Barbara would probably agree to be in the study, and when I called her, she did.

We arrived at her shop together on the observation day. Barbara was fashionably dressed in green wool pants, oatmeal cardigan, and designer scarf. She turned on the computer, vacuumed the shop, and examined two sconces she had painted the day before.

Barbara greeted her first customer warmly, and discovered the client was a novice sewer. She helped her choose fabric from the bolts of unique, expensive fabric hanging on the walls and on seven-foot high shelves. She provided "little tips of the trade" as she cut the fabric. At the counter the customer asked, "Do you take hysterical sewing calls?"

"Yes," said Barbara, laughing, "here's my card, and good luck."

When Barbara showed an elderly couple the sample fabric books hanging on the wall, they appeared to be overwhelmed. She asked many questions so she could help them find two fabrics that they could consider before buying, since most people do not order expensive fabric immediately. Later, she suggested another client sign out sample books to show her church committee so they could take time to choose chair fabric.

While cutting fabric for a customer who appeared stressed, Barbara commented, "It looks like a lot when it is all spread out like this." She mentioned that she carried drapery accessories that the lady may want to buy another day, since "You may not want long rods hanging out the window [of the car] on such a cold day!" Another lady wanted window-covering ideas, so Barbara showed her the displays throughout her shop. When a couple wanted a simple treatment, she directed them to her window blind samples.

It was obvious that Barbara's friendly, business-like attitude extended to her staff when one of the women stopped in and the two chatted amiably as Barbara filled her in on the day's events. Her brief phone calls reflected the same professional congeniality. She often called with a list of things to discuss, ending with, "Thanks darling!"

When she later "crunched numbers," Barbara realized she had overpaid a former employee, called her, and rectified the situation. By the end of the day, she had a computerized print out of "the bottom line," and told me that she had made a profit.

Case Study III: Sandi

Sandi contracted her time as saleswoman for a collagen company and as a laser technician/collagen treatment specialist for a clinic. Her home office was a corner of her basement. The Director of the Enterprise Centre gave me Sandi's name as a successful entrepreneur, who, when contacted, agreed to let me observe and interview her.

On the appointed afternoon, I arrived at Sandi's home where she greeted me warmly. We had planned on driving to a doctor's office where she could demonstrate the collagen product by doing a treatment. We finally received a confirmation call 20 minutes before the designated time and were on the road in 5 minutes. Sandi had taken a priority management course that had taught her how to be organized and ready for action.

Before going into the office, Sandi repaired her makeup because she is a walking advertisement for her beauty product. She greeted the physician confidently and professionally in taupe trousers and black woolen jacket. Although his treatment room was not set up properly for collagen injections, Sandi made the patient, his wife, comfortable. She began the injections immediately. While demonstrating the technique, Sandi persistently pitched her product to the somewhat unresponsive physician. She said later that she knew the doctor only wanted the product for his wife, not for his patients.

The following afternoon, I met Sandi at the clinic where she wore a white lab coat. She ushered me into a spacious room with a dentist-type chair and an adjustable overhead light, indicating that this was a proper treatment room. She performed the

collagen treatments or laser surgery with patience and compassion. She listened intently to patients' questions before answering them thoroughly. She artfully kept the conversation flowing as she performed the procedure, often sharing laughter with the patient. When a gentleman expressed apprehension about the healing process, she advised him on the exact use of creams, and gave him more samples, remembering he was not on a medical plan. At the end of the day the energetic Sandi was in no hurry to go home and was willing to give a patient a full treatment after hours.

Case Study IV: Diane

Diane contracted her writing skills to commercial firms. She had run a successful one-person operation for twelve years, five of which were full-time. We were acquaintances, and when I asked her to be one of my subjects, she agreed.

I arrived at Diane's home one cold morning and was greeted warmly by her husband, who also worked from home. Their upstairs bedroom-turned-office barely had space for two desks, two computers, two chairs, and two bookcases. Diane's framed degree and certificates hung beside family photographs on the cream walls.

She was on the phone with a client who wanted her to write an article about the closures of its various branches due to an ice storm. Diane, casually dressed in a long jean skirt, navy cardigan, and fuschia turtleneck sweater, was business-like as she gathered information from a number of managers on the phone. Some called from home, divulging personal information; Diane showed concern, ending with, "Good luck to you!" While she was on a line, someone would often leave a voice mail message, which she returned immediately. By 12:30 she had faxed the completed article to the client.

That morning Diane also worked on other projects, such as a client's monthly newsletter. When she changed projects, she jotted it on a timesheet for billing purposes.

By 12:45 we were off for her first meeting away from the office. When we arrived at the client's office, Diane reminded her that I would be sitting in. She opened the meeting by asking questions for an article she was writing. The disorganized client could not find the required information. Diane sat calmly. The client's partner joined us and provided Diane with the material. She occasionally summarized her notes for him, ensuring that she had the correct information, and by 1:55 we were on our way to her next meeting.

As past president of a writer's group, Diane met with its executive. She had told them that I would be accompanying her. She seemed relaxed as she chatted and laughed with her peer group, although she was quiet, composed, and efficient for the most part. She made notes of items she volunteered to do, and added comments or gave advice. For example, she had set up the organization's website, and volunteered to update it. She also suggested a date for the next general meeting. When the group broke up by 3:30, Diane said, "See why I come to the executive meeting? They always make me laugh!"

Back home, she greeted her family with hugs and kisses. She then advised me that she would read briefly, and that was the end of her day. I thanked her and left.

Personal Elements In The Entrepreneurial Journey

I have presented Amy, Barbara, Sandi, and Diane in their respective worlds of work because each had her own personality and her own story to tell. One question in this study concerned the role played in the entrepreneur's journey by a combination of personal elements that had emerged in the literature: skills, attitudes, personality traits,

and sociological conditions. These four concepts provided the framework for the following presentation. Deductive codes were derived from the literature for each of the four concepts, and proved useful for sorting the data in this portion of the analysis.

Skills

All four entrepreneurs brought a range of skills and abilities to their respective businesses that enabled them to open and manage their particular ventures. It was evident that their specific skills included technical, human, and administrative skills.

Technical skills meant that the entrepreneurs understood their product or services, had the ability to design or redesign the business, and had a good knowledge of the industry. All four women had had some technical skill prior to starting their journey as an entrepreneur, and continued to work on skills once in the business. While Amy attended Coffee College and Diane enrolled in journalism class, Sandi and Barbara had had on-the-job training.

Amy, a former nurse, bought a coffee shop franchise with high standards, grueling training, and tests that, "if you fail, you don't get the job" (A, p. 28)[1]. While the franchise had originally helped her open and design the shop, after one and a half years in the franchise business, she understood enough to tell me, "I wouldn't franchise again" (A, p. 33). On the other hand, Barbara and Sandi had both been employed in their respective industries prior to striking out on their own. Barbara "had been in retail for about 15 years" (B, p. 17) and, to continue to follow industry trends, she told me, "I do go to seminars. There is an interior design seminar every spring . . . that is really comprehensive . . . and from reading trade magazines" (B, p. 23). Sandi had trained in a

[1] This reference reads as "interview with Amy, page 28". All subsequent references follow the same format. B = interview with Barbara, S = interview with Sandi, and D = interview with Diane.

cosmetic surgeon's clinic for three years, and as a freelance saleswoman, had "ended up top international [sales representative]" with the collagen company (S, p. 26). Meanwhile, Diane told me, "I decided to do freelancing [writing] and at the same time I enrolled in Ryerson magazine journalism"(D, p. 8). She learned that writing was a competitive business, but she cut a niche for herself in the commercial market by specializing in corporate communications, in addition to writing magazine articles.

Human skills referred to having an understanding of how to lead and motivate employees and how to network with people outside of the business. All four women were involved with people every day from the beginning of their journeys. Their human skills were evident in the observations and the interviews.

When Barbara opened her own shop, she told me, "All the rules that they tell you not to do, I did. I should have known better because I had been in retail for so long" (B, p. 19). While Barbara fired two employees before finding two great replacements, Amy got it right from the beginning. When asked if she put her staff ahead of her customers, Amy replied, "I do set them above my customers . . . I care" (A p.41-2). Sandi did not employ anyone, but she knew how to network. She explained, "It was my networking that helped me build my business" (S, p. 21). Diane networked with a writing group, took an active role, and volunteered suggestions such as, "I'll put it [the date of future meeting] on the website" (D, p. 35), which she had set up to promote the group. Barbara had joined "a breakfast networking group . . . that helped a little bit but I just found out that the place where I was most productive . . . was being in the store because I've made some great contacts just with people being in here" (B, p. 22). Amy "worked the street"

smiling and waving at everyone when she walked through town. As she told me, "I don't think you can NOT be part of the community when you are in the community" (A, p. 35).

Administrative skills were illustrated through the entrepreneurs' detailed planning. While the skill sets varied in the management of their businesses, the four women all indicated that an important aspect of administering the business was managing finances. Sandi procrastinated about financial matters, while Barbara emphasized their importance. Diane routinely set aside time to do the accounting, and Amy worried about the lack of good management on the part of the franchiser.

Amy had learned how to plan and manage her shop so well that after 18 months she was critical of the franchise's inept administrative abilities. For example, she told me, "I think the advertising is the pits at this franchise . . . that is where we lose a lot" (A, p. 34). Sandi questioned her administrative skills, so she attended a priority management course, where she realized she must meet with her accountant frequently. She said, "It really is something that weighs on me and that is something I have learned in the last year is that I tend to be a bit of a procrastinator...[but] I do my own invoicing and my son helps me a lot with that" (S, p. 24). She recognized, "I think I don't know how to manage money but I think I do or I wouldn't be where I am" (S, p. 23). On the other hand, Diane did her own books, managing finances with little trouble. She routinely marked her time on the time sheet throughout the day, because her simple philosophy was, "If you don't keep track of your time then you can't bill your time" (D, p. 16). Barbara excelled in administrative skills, as illustrated when she created a business plan in a self-employment assistance program that qualified her for "Unemployment Insurance for a whole year while you run your business" (B, p. 18). In this course she had been

"virtually the only one who had an accounting background . . . you really need that stuff [to run your own business]" (B, p. 19), Barbara told me. She emphasized the administrative skills as prime importance.

Attitudes

Each of the women held an uncompromising outlook on life as an entrepreneur. Three common attitudes, or outlooks, included drive, persistence, and acceptance of working under ambiguous circumstances.

Drive was demonstrated in the entrepreneurs' motivation for starting the entrepreneurial journey and continuing for at least 18 months. By their own admission, both Amy and Barbara were driven. Amy had a desire to give 100% in everything. She told me, "When I take things on, be it at home or here, it really is all or nothing" (A, p. 47). When remembering what started her on this journey, Barbara enthusiastically told me, "It was something I had to do--I was completely driven" (B, p. 40). When asked what continued to motivate her to remain on the journey 12 years later, Diane answered, laughingly, "Well, there's mortgage, there are children" (D, p. 19). She quickly added, "I do get a lot of satisfaction out of doing the work. I do enjoy it" (D, p. 19). Sandi demonstrated her motivation by her obvious enjoyment when she showed me a photo album filled with pictures of satisfied patients after their cosmetic surgery. She was motivated by her success as a sales representative and asked me, "Am I supposed to blow my own horn?"(S, p. 26). These women did not need an external force to get them to work. Their motivation came from within.

Persistence in these women was evident as perseverance or determination in both beginning the entrepreneurial journey and continuing in it despite some setbacks they had

not anticipated. Amy acknowledged, "This is a hell of a job. I had no idea--it is physical, it is a mental kind of thing" (A, p. 41). She then lamented, "You think, Oh good--almost caught up--yet there are 20 other things that need to be done" (A, p. 41). When she added, "If they are not done, you have a problem tomorrow" (A, p. 41), she certainly demonstrated her persistence. When Diane wanted to change careers, she "looked into Ryerson. It was the right time of year . . . I went to Ryerson . . . and I remember meeting . . . one of the instructors . . . I just sort of begged: 'Please, I promise I'll be a good student . . . Please let me in'" (D, p. 12). Persistence got her enrolled. Both Barbara and Sandi demonstrated persistence when dealing with bank loan managers. Barbara's bank manager told her, "We're being audited in two weeks and you have to bring your line of credit [$10,000] around to zero in two weeks" (B, p. 28). She "was down to zero [money]" (B, p. 29). Rather than declare bankruptcy, she approached another bank manager with, "Look if we give you a line of credit for my business and his (my husband has a business) then you get our mortgage" (B, p. 29). The bank gave her the loan. She exclaimed, "I won't [give in]. No matter what . . . if it is something that means the life of my business--you fight tooth and nail" (B, p. 35). When Sandi attempted to procure a start-up loan of $2500, she told me, "I was meeting with the bank manager. He was terrible to me . . . he made me come back two or three times. I found it so humiliating" (S, p. 24). The bank manager refused her the loan, but she persisted until "I ended up finding this loans officer at the Bank of Montreal" (S, p. 24) who "was wonderful--she helped me re-negotiate my mortgage [too]" (S, p. 25). For these four, persistence to overcome the obstacles was critical to starting their journey and continuing in their respective businesses. It may not have been easy to carry on, yet each of these women

did just that. Whether it was getting a bank loan, dealing with the physical exhaustion, or pleading with teachers, all four persevered in their ventures.

Ambiguity for the entrepreneurs meant being uncertain because of the constant and unpredictable changes in the entrepreneurial journey. For Amy, ambiguity was a way of life. She indicated that if ambiguity bothers you, "don't take it [the new venture] on" (A, p. 39). Initially, Sandi found the ambiguous situation intolerable when she lost her job because, she said, "I grew up in a very structured environment . . . I became very, very depressed" (S, p. 18). However, three years later, she looked forward to whatever the future brings because "I like the variety" (S, p. 30). For Barbara, ambiguity meant "lots of options. I love change. I don't like being stagnant" (B, p. 41). She further explained, "as soon as we--my husband and I--started talking about what we were going to do . . . then I was really interested again, because then it was uncertain again" (B, p. 41). Like Barbara, Diane was thrilled by ambiguity. She said,

> There is the element of 'the chase' . . . now when the phone rings . . . it can be a surprise . . . you get a call from a new client, or from an old client you haven't heard from or . . . an existing client calls with an interesting project. You never know. Tomorrow I could get some wonderful things happen, or nothing. So that is kind of exciting. (D, p. 20)

Each of these women knew they had to tolerate ambiguity if they were to continue the journey. Although there was no guaranteed pay cheque, the majority of them even experienced a certain thrill about future possibilities.

Personality Traits

While each of the four women had a different personality, there were two traits common to all: creativity and innovation. Interestingly, the two traits were so intertwined in each of them that where there was creativity, there was also innovation.

The entrepreneurs demonstrated the existence of a **creative trait** when they could visualize changes or transformations within their businesses. They illustrated their **innovative trait** when they could put the changes or transformations into action. Each of the four entrepreneurs would think about an idea and then act upon it.

For Amy, people were her "raison d'être," and it was her handling of people that highlighted both her creative and innovative traits. For example, she said that she had brainstormed how to let rejected applicants down in a caring fashion, and then she put the creative plan into action. "Every single one of those kids received a letter from me--just saying thanks for your resume . . . There is a 'treat-a-friend' card included. Please come on in to the store. Ask for Amy. Introduce yourselves" (A, p. 35). Sandi wanted to change her business relationship with one of the surgeons by either increasing her consulting fees or not having to travel to his clinic in Toronto, so she told him, "'My fee is 60/40 split.' He freaked, went nuts" (S, p. 22). It freed Sandi from the contract with him and allowed her to travel elsewhere.

Both Barbara and Diane illustrated creativity in thinking of ways to meet the client's expectations, and innovativeness in making the expectation a reality. Barbara told the story about one of her customers who

> had a 20-foot window. We had absolutely no supplier that could supply a wrought iron rod that was 20 feet long. You can't ship it; you can't forge it; you

> can't do anything with it. So we had to figure out a way. Their brackets didn't work. So we ended up using what is usually a hold back for brackets and we filed them down and modified the whole thing and joined it all . . . It was worth thousands and thousands of dollars. (B, p. 42)

Meanwhile, Diane told me that the magazine writer has to "come up with the idea first and then present it [the idea] to the editor" (D, p. 21). Then the writer must be innovative enough to "come up with a solution" (D, p. 21). For example, when she wanted to write an article on home births, she said, "I wrote about when Carrie [my daughter] was born" (D, p. 31). In all four women, the innovative trait followed very closely behind the creative trait as they continued in their entrepreneurial journey.

Sociological Conditions

Sociological conditions, or demographics, played a role in their decision to begin the entrepreneurial journey. Four women were specifically chosen, so gender was naturally a condition in this study. Their educational backgrounds were similar, as were their ages. But there were some surprises with respect to childhood backgrounds.

Educational background of the four women was surprisingly similar. All four had received their undergraduate degrees, although only Barbara had majored in business, with some preparatory entrepreneurial classes. Sandi and Amy had nursing degrees, and Diane held an arts degree. In addition, all four women had also taken steps towards preparing for their specific journeys into entrepreneurship. To learn how to open and manage a franchised coffee shop, Amy "did a month in coffee college" (A, p. 37) with her franchise. When Barbara prepared to open her shop, she told me, "I went through a course that the employment and immigration sponsored, a self-employment

assistance program" (B, p. 18). In anticipation of becoming a freelance health care consultant, Sandi said, "I started on this entrepreneurial program" (S, p. 19), which was the same self-employment assistance program that Barbara had taken. Diane told me, "[when] I wanted to make a career change . . . I enrolled in Ryerson in magazine journalism" (D, p. 8). While each one had her undergraduate degree, none attended graduate school. However, each one took a course to prepare them for the new journey. Educational background was one of the components that played a role in starting the journey.

The age at which the women either began the entrepreneurial journey or began to investigate the possibility of such a journey was, again, surprisingly consistent. Three of them were in their early 30's when they began to seriously contemplate an entrepreneurial venture. Amy said, "I was probably about 30, 31, 32. I started investigating businesses. You know again, younger kids--so that prevents you from doing what you want" (A, p. 24). When asked how old she was when she opened her shop, Barbara immediately answered, "34. I think 35 was a milestone for me because I thought even in my 20's I would have my own business . . . So the 35 looming was, I think, kind of a milestone. I turned 35 about 6 months after I started the business" (B, p. 40). When asked how old she was when she decided to make the career change, Diane answered, "30, 29, 30 I guess" (D, p. 11). Sandi was older than the other three women were when she opened her business. She was 47 at the time of the interview. When asked how long she had been in the health care consulting business, she replied, "3 years in September" (S, p. 28). She was 44 when she began her new venture. Although this age put Sandi in a different decade of life for start-up, the age difference is not large.

While three of the women began careers in entrepreneurship in their early- to mid-30's, one began in her mid-40's. This represented a short span of about a decade within which all four decided to go the entrepreneurial route. Age was an interesting similarity, then, and was another component in the decision to begin the entrepreneurial journey.

Childhood background was the degree to which the four women had any exposure to entrepreneurial activity in their formative years. Their answers did not all confirm such exposure. Amy and Barbara both had entrepreneurial fathers. Amy told me, "I grew up in family businesses--father was self-employed for 50 years, maybe 55 years. He sold out in June, and sold out as a self-made millionaire, and I thought that would probably be the route" (A, p. 22). Like Amy, Barbara told me, "My father had his own business . . . for years [and] my grandmother was actually a designer in Toronto . . . So maybe that is where the sewing thing comes from" (B, pp. 38 - 39). When asked if she had anyone in her background who would be deemed entrepreneurial, Sandi answered, "No" (S, p. 20). Neither did Diane, who told me, "My father worked for the same company for 30 odd years. He . . . went to work for a company . . . in his early 20's. He worked there for the rest of his life, until he retired. My mother? No" (D, p. 10). Half of these businesswomen had entrepreneurial families to model, while the other half had no such models.

Summary of Personal Elements

Amy, Barbara, Sandi, and Diane demonstrated skills required to begin and to continue the entrepreneurial journey. Even Amy, who initially depended on the franchise for information and design, had learned a lot about running her business and was almost as proficient in her industry as the other three were in their respective fields. Their

people skills were well honed; all four continuously networked outside of their businesses, while Amy and Barbara also worked at maintaining good staff relations. They all demonstrated detailed planning ability, and acknowledged that "the bottom line" was a good indication of excellent business management.

These women displayed similar attitudes both when they began and as they continued in their respective journeys. While Amy and Barbara admitted to being completely driven from the outset, Diane and Sandi indicated that their drive increased as they made profits and enjoyed the entrepreneurial journey. Without persistence, Diane would not have been admitted into journalism class, and Sandi would not have received the bank loan to start up. For Amy and Barbara, their persistent attitude allowed them to remain open despite setbacks such as long hours and bank managers calling in loans. All of them acknowledged that ambiguity was part of the entrepreneurial journey, and three of them believed that the ambiguity could actually be enjoyable.

Creativity and innovation were two personality traits common to all four from the beginning of their entrepreneurial journeys. Each of them had described a creative idea, and then discussed how they made it a reality in their business. By combining the two traits, they had designed a "treat-a-friend" coupon, made a curtain rod out of pipes, left an undesired business relationship, or wrote a promised article.

The sociological elements were important components that lead them to begin their entrepreneurial journeys. Each of them had an undergraduate degree and had taken some form of preparatory training to start their respective journeys. Amy and Diane opened their businesses in their early thirties. Barbara opened her business just 6 months before the age of 35. Sandi began her journey at the age of 44, which was still within a

relatively short span of 10 years from the other three women. Finally, it was a surprise to discover that only Amy and Barbara had entrepreneurial parents.

Contextual Elements in the Entrepreneurial Journey

Although the deductive analysis was useful for initial sorting of the data, it did not capture the entire data set. An inductive analysis yielded additional themes and patterns that provided more insight into the journey of an entrepreneur. Two major themes emerged from the information that Barbara, Amy, Diane, and Sandi had provided. The first major theme included contextual elements involved in the entrepreneurial journey. The term, "contextual elements," refers to those aspects of the journey by which the women derived a sense of meaning about their experience. The contextual elements that surfaced in this study included impetus for beginning the journey, personal control, outcomes of the journey, and sustainability of the journey. These topics provided the framework for the following presentation of the contextual elements.

Impetus

The first contextual element involved the impetus, or incentive, for beginning their respective journeys in entrepreneurship. There were two different incentives discussed in these narratives: "pull" and "push."

Pull. The motivating factor for both Amy and Barbara to begin their journeys was a "pull" that lured them into this entrepreneurial activity. Amy said, "I think I always knew I would do something" (A, p. 23). She bought a franchise. Barbara divulged how driven she was to own her own shop:

> There was no stopping me . . . I had a really good job offer--like six figures that I turned down--you know with bonuses and so on. It would have been almost $100,000 a year and I said no. That is how badly I wanted it. (B, p. 40)

Barbara described the moment she realized her dream: "When they put the sign up in front of the store . . . I went and stood back by the road to look at it. I got all choked up. I was so proud. My own business. It is for real" (B, p. 37).

Push. On the other hand, for Diane and Sandi, the motivating factor was more like a "push" to start their journeys. Both of them had received their degrees, obtained jobs, and did not think of entrepreneurial activities. In fact, Sandi said, "Did I want to be an entrepreneur? Absolutely not!" (S, p. 20). However, three months after she and her husband had separated, Sandi's boss told her, "I have decided to reorganize my offices and I no longer need your services" (S, p. 16). Sandi asked herself, "What am I going to do . . . there were no jobs . . . It looked like a terrible thing" (S, p. 18). When her lawyer asked her about the cosmetic treatments she was trained to do, he suggested, "Why don't you go out on your own and start your own business?" (S, p. 18). However, she told me, "I ended up in the hospital in an out-patients basis classified as having an acute depression . . . [then] I saw an article . . . on a nurse . . . who had lost her job and decided to become an entrepreneurial consultant" (S, p. 18). Only then did Sandi consider the possibility of running her own business, and she enrolled in an entrepreneurial course. Here, she discovered, "What most people fear--what drives people--to . . . work well at a job is fear of not having enough money" (S, p. 20). However, she divulged, "I was scared to death" (S, p. 30), but "I got very spiritual. I read Deepak Chopra and a lot of really self-motivating things on positive thinking" (S, p. 28). "Having faith in yourself

. . . being thankful that you are healthy, [having] an education, etc." (S, p. 20) motivated her to open her consulting business. Three years later she could tell me, "This is the first time in my life that I have ever had the revenue to be able to do that [put money into an RRSP]" (S, p 23).

Diane was 30 years old working in a place she disliked, but, she said, "it didn't really occur to me to change fields" (D, p. 11). She confided that it was her mother's death at this time that "really made me think you only live once. It took me 30 years to figure this is it" (D, p. 11). She quit her job, and began writing part-time because she realized, "if you don't do what makes you happy . . . well then you sort of missed the boat" (D, p. 12). She was then pushed into full time entrepreneurship "4 ½ or 5 yeas ago when my husband wasn't working" (D, p. 10).

Personal Control

While their motivation for starting the journey may have differed amongst the four women, once they had begun their journey, each valued the second contextual element: personal control. They enjoyed having control over their own destinies.

After running clinics and doctors' offices for years, Amy had decided, "Enough is enough . . . working for everybody else 22 hours a day wasn't what I wanted to do any longer" (A, p. 23). It was time to take control, to be her own boss. Similarly, Barbara told me, "I had always wanted my own business for years and years. I had always thought about it while working for other people and decided at the end of my last job that the time was right" (B, p. 17). She later added, "There is so much freedom in your own business" (B, p. 27).

Sandi, on the other hand, thought to herself when she was fired, "I am a nurse . . . People tell me what to do" (S, p. 18). However, three years after being fired and running her own consulting business, she told me, "I have control over my destiny now. I've been approached by so many people to work full time and I wouldn't do it. You couldn't pay me enough to do it!" (S, p. 27). Similarly, when asked if she considered herself extremely successful, Diane answered,

> Well yes. I wouldn't see why I would leave. Leaving would mean working for someone else, which I have been offered a few times in the past year . . . I feel like saying "Why? I have my own cubicle. Why would I want to be in your cubicle?" (D, p. 35)

Once the four women had been "pushed" or "pulled" into starting their individual entrepreneurial journeys, all enjoyed having a sense of personal control.

Outcomes

The third contextual element was the outcome, or result, of their chosen journeys. The outcomes emerged as each story unfolded. One outcome that was surprisingly similar in all four narratives was the excellent service each provided in their chosen venture. Another outcome that proved to be different for the women was their profitability in their chosen journeys.

Service. One outcome observed in the women's journeys was the excellent service each provided daily. Amy's customers delighted in her attention and friendliness. She often listened to their stories while serving them. Indeed, she said,

> I find it really amazing for 5 minutes when I get to talk to them what they tell me. It surprises me because I normally wouldn't tell a soul things like this--but they

> do . . . they will tell me their wife died three weeks ago. And I am around the corner [of the counter] and sitting down for 45 minutes. (A, p. 40)

Amy demonstrated a caring personality throughout the observation day. For example, she asked a regular customer, "How is your throat, Sam?" (A, p. 5), or "Do you have a busy day ahead of you?" (A, p. 3). When an older couple ordered one muffin, Amy asked, "Do you want that cut in half, and would you like butter with either half?" (A, p. 6). When asked about memorable moments in her business career, Amy regaled me with stories of customers. For example, "one mom actually went into labour here. She came in for her cappuccino because she was in labour . . . the baby's first year birthday we had here . . . another customer, also pregnant at the time . . . we were picking out patterns for the nursery" (A, p. 52). She exclaimed, "It is fun literally being part of people's lives . . . it's really a big family in here--and it is growing with the customers that come in" (A, p. 53).

As a clinician, Sandi also demonstrated that she cared for her clients. During collagen injections, she would ask, "How are you doing? OK?" (S, p. 6). Sometimes she would reassure them with, "I like your lips . . . within 2 hours this is all going to settle down . . . it takes a little more time but it is worth it" (S, p. 6). When tears started rolling down one patient's cheek, Sandi immediately wiped them away while exclaiming, "Oops. Tears--tears of joy" (S, p. 7), making the patient smile. After taking the medical history of one patient with varicose veins, Sandi illustrated her concern by saying,

> I think you could get good cosmetic results, but I would like to make sure everything is good . . . I'd feel better if you'd see him [a surgeon] first, the girls in the front will get an appointment for you. (S, p. 11)

When she met with a patient whose face was still healing, Sandi referred to this as the "I hate it stage" (S, p. 12). She encouraged patients. For example when she saw one woman's healed face, she exclaimed, "Let's take a picture . . . Fabulous" (S, p. 12).

While Barbara was friendly when she greeted her customers, her approach was not so much one of caring but rather one of deciphering what the customer was looking for in the way of window covering. Barbara told me, "You have to peg the customer and go from there. So you know you have to figure out what your customer wants" (B, p. 23). For example, when an elderly gentleman returned samples to Barbara, she asked, "Did you find the sample you wanted?" (B, p. 6). He confirmed that they had, but that he wanted his wife to order the fabric with him, and she could not be there. "Not a problem," answered Barbara, "I'll be back in the store on Thursday" (B, p. 6). Another customer asked if Barbara was with someone else because I was chatting with her. Barbara's quick response was, "No, I am all yours" (B, p. 11). Later, reflecting on the recession, she said,

> You can't blame them because that happens in business all the time. They say, "Are you going to be here next year? Are you going to be here next week?" And people, after the 80's and the beginning of the 90's with how hard things were, really got used to that. And so they are a little gun-shy now. They don't want to give you money unless they are really, really sure you are going to be around. So it is important to preserve your image with the clients. (B, p. 32)

Barbara understood her customers' concerns about ordering merchandise from her for fear that she may not be in business.

Diane approached the concept of serving her clients with a business-like attitude. She told me that,

> I sent out a survey . . . to regular clients to see how satisfied they were with my work and all of them . . . were very satisfied with the work I had done. That made me feel good. So I thought well at least I must be on the right track if I'm not losing clients. (D, p. 24)

Diane also indicated that when she took vacations,

> I would tell my regular clients ahead of time . . . One time I was going away for a week . . . I made arrangements with another writer . . . so at least you don't feel when you go away that you are leaving people high and dry. (D, p. 18)

However, in the unusual circumstance of the ice storm, Diane demonstrated concern when she spoke to some of the victims. For example, she asked, "What are people doing? Hope your power stays on--when I hear it may take weeks--every day I now thank a higher power that I have power" (D, p. 1). While discussing the ice storm with a Toronto manager, she reiterated her conversation with one of the ice storm victims: "When I talked to her, she was almost crying as she described how communities were helping each other and the clients' offices were helping" (D, p. 2). Diane referred to the ice storm bulletin in her interview. She told me,

> The people in the sites that were affected, they really liked that article and they were happy to see themselves in there, plus it got picked up by the Global Network news which gets distributed all over the world so they were really happy. Unfortunately, it had to be a disaster to get them in there. (D, p. 36)

Underneath that professional aura was a very caring person.

Profitability. The second outcome observed in the entrepreneurial journeys of all four women was the issue of profitability. This particular outcome indicated the differences between the shopkeepers and the home-businesswomen. Amy, one of the shopkeepers, told me that she got into the business "for the people and the love of it. Unfortunately, . . . I have to think about finances" (A, p. 56). Another time she told me, "Economically, it is not what it should be" (A, p. 23). Later she said, "I am hoping it will become, well, profitable" (A, p. 47). She added, "I just hope that it will become financially acceptable" (A, p. 51). Barbara, the second shopkeeper, mentioned at the beginning of the interview that, "I have a business degree so you do a lot of number crunching in four years in business school" (B, p. 18). She told me outright, "I think happiness and the money go hand in hand, which is probably contrary to every textbook you read, but if you are not making money, the fun kind of goes away after awhile" (B, p. 27). She later divulged,

> Financially--our lifestyle really shut down when I started my business because we pretty much put all of our money into it. We're not going out for dinners anymore, going shopping, or going on holidays the way we used to when I had a good income. (B, p. 36)

On the other hand, Diane and Sandi, the home businesswomen, did not dwell on profitability. Sandi honestly confided, "With regard to the dollar, ask me how much money I made last year. I would not know. I am not a numbers person" (S, p. 23). When she won the annual sales award, she reiterated, "You are given a forecast and a budget. I don't know numbers but I ended up top international . . . I was shocked" (S, p. 26). She further mentioned that when she agreed to work for the company as a sales

representative, "It wasn't the dollar that drew me to that job. It was the contacts and the networking" (S, p. 27). She did not think money should be uppermost in her thoughts, although she admitted, "I need money to live" (S, p. 29). She added, "I am not rich, but happy with my lifestyle" (S, p. 29). Diane seemed to share Sandi's response to money. She told me, "I do get a lot of satisfaction out of doing the work. I do enjoy it . . . If I won the lottery, I'd accept the $10 million, but there are some clients I wouldn't keep" (D, p. 19). While she stated that "the bottom line is how much money [one makes] . . . Also, it is the feedback that you get from the clients" (D, p. 24). She added that "You like to feel that you are learning something too . . . You like to do new things . . . It's not just the dollar" (D, p. 24).

Sustainability

Sustainability was the last contextual theme to emerge in this study. Sustainability referred to the psychological and sociological elements that affected the entrepreneur's decision to continue the journey. Amy, Barbara, Diane, and Sandi all introduced the first issue of sustainability, that of balance between home and the workplace. The second issue, moral support for the journey, proved interesting because it differed amongst the four women. In addition, the desire to continue with the specific entrepreneurial journey proved to be surprising, since each one had indicated their pleasure at being interviewed as successful entrepreneurs when first contacted.

Balance All of them indicated that they experienced difficulty in achieving equilibrium between work and home, yet recognized that balance was necessary for sustaining their respective journeys. For example, Amy divulged,

> The hardest thing for me has been balance between home and business. I think a lot of women find that. That is not a sexist comment. I think it is very true. It doesn't matter whether you are a mom at home or a mom at work, when mom goes home, they expect mom to have everything in order. I think things are changing with this generation that works with me. They are going to have to do 50% of it. But I know in my generation, from what I see in my friends too, it is mom who is supposed to be there . . . I mean you can work, you can have a career. But you are supposed to be home, dinner and whatever. The most difficult obstacle has been balance. Everything else I don't consider an obstacle. (p. 38)

When asked if the job had to come first, Amy answered, "Yes . . . It has to come first . . . I think home suffers" (A, p. 24). Amy, a single parent, began her journey with the idea of keeping home and business separated, but found instead that "It all does mesh together" (A, p. 48). In fact, she added, "My staff knows pretty much everything that is happening in my life" (A, p. 48). To illustrate her point, she told me, "I moved--a simple example . . . Every one of my staff showed up that day of my move" (A, p. 50). Amy took being a mother and a manager seriously. She indicated that trying to maintain a balance was difficult because, as she said, "I do have high expectations and that is probably in all honesty my downfall too. My expectations are very high. 100% on everything or it is not . . . so I am learning to cope with that in here" (A, p. 50).

Barbara also emphasized achieving equilibrium between home and business. She stressed, "I think it is so important to really balance your life, and work can become everything" (B, p. 36). She warned, "When you are an entrepreneur obviously you have workaholic tendencies that can take over" (B, p. 36). To prevent the business from taking

over her personal life completely, she opted to close the shop on Sundays so she could relax with her partner. For Barbara, one of the biggest obstacles "is my own personal stress levels" (B, p. 31). Maintaining a balance included keeping herself

> personally, mentally and physically fit . . . I work out faithfully. Sometimes there is just no escape from thinking about your business . . . But the one thing I have found over the years that does make it go away is being with friends and family and just talking about other things. (B, p. 35)

Like Barbara, Sandi made time for both herself and her family. But she did not always think that way. Before being fired, she told me, "80% of my life was involved in work, 5% was my kids, 3% was my husband, and 2% was me. So when I lost 80% of my life I had no residual" (S, p. 19). The entrepreneurial course she enrolled in prior to beginning her journey focussed on

> setting goals and being balanced--being a more balanced person. Being self-employed allows you to gain self-control in your life. You can work like a crazy woman or you can just work at the pace that you need to work at . . . What buys you a sort of happy life is being balanced. (S, p. 19)

Three years after taking the entrepreneurial course, she could tell me, "my priority is my children" (S, p. 25). She had begun taking individual vacations with each of her three children. She was already separated before she had been fired, and was later divorced. Although she divulged that "I am not as balanced as I'd like to be" (S, p. 28), she had learned that "when you become self employed, you do get kind of greedy. You start making money and you want more" (S, p. 28). For Sandi, money "is just not what

motivates me" (S, p. 29). For her, "The *Simple Abundance* book just keeps reminding you every day of what is important in your life" (S, p. 23).

Although Diane had not taken an entrepreneurial course, she, too, said, "I think you have to strike a balance" (D, p. 15). She discussed balance in terms of internal and external obstacles. Like Barbara, her internal obstacle was dealing with the anxiety of running her business. She described this inner barrier as "something [an article] that is really difficult to write or something [a topic] that is hard to research" (D, p. 18). She dealt with this stress by breaking "them [large, overwhelming projects] into smaller parts . . . then it doesn't become a big challenge" (D, p. 18). She also indicated that "If I am really busy I will force myself to take a break because I know you can't sit here for 7 hours straight" (D, p. 15). She exercised every morning before starting her day, and in good weather would tell herself, "as soon as I finish this I'll go for a bike ride" (D, p. 14). Diane described the external obstacles as

> all the other stuff that sort of interferes with getting your work done, and that could be family things. You know you are going great guns and your child has to come home sick. You have to change gears because she needs you. (D, p. 17).

Diane worked at solving these external problems; she told me, "I think the way around that is by doing some planning" (D, p. 17). For example, she said, "I try not to let the deadlines get so tight . . . I always leave some slack in the schedule" (D, p. 29). Diane's family was very much a priority. She referred to them throughout the conversation as part of the balancing act. For example, she indicated,

> There were a couple of times when I missed [children's] soccer games because of clients. It only happened twice and I swore I would never do it again because it made me really mad. The client wasn't organized and I missed this game. That's because they [the client] did everything at the last minute. (D, p. 29)

When asked how she planned to not have this happen again, she simply answered, "I wouldn't even answer the phone" (D, p. 29).

Moral support. The four women all found ways of gaining support, but there were interesting ways of approaching it. Both Amy and Barbara had successful entrepreneurial parents, so for them, entrepreneurship was just a way of life. Amy told me, "I think I always knew I would do something" (A, p. 23). Amy was a single parent who depended on her parents for both child care and moral support in her entrepreneurial journey. Barbara told me, "In university I took entrepreneurship courses, which I don't know why; they interested me but obviously at that point I was even thinking of my own business then" (B, p. 38). Not only did Barbara have parental support, but she also had support from her husband. She said,

> My husband is a rock. Our personal life has always been very solid. Without that it would be very hard to carry this on my own. He has been there--he is an experienced entrepreneur . . . He knows all the stuff and knows what to say to get me through it. (B, p. 36)

On the other hand, neither Sandi nor Diane had had a parent who modeled the entrepreneurial lifestyle, and neither received much support from anyone when they first indicated an interest in beginning an entrepreneurial journey. When Sandi started her consulting business, she said, "I was constantly in environments where people were

trying to make me feel . . . that I was not worth what I was asking for. That was a big hurdle" (S, p. 21). In fact, she added that "two men were totally demoralizing . . . They really kind of put the gears into me [by telling me that Dr. S] 'wouldn't pay you half of what you are talking about'" (S, p. 21). She also admitted, "I was still not in great shape and I remember the tears" (S, p. 21). However, Dr. S. proved to be supportive; she works out of his clinic as a cosmetic technician.

Diane told me,

> I remember being at dinner one night with my husband. I had not really thought it through. But I said, "Dear, I think I sort of want to quit my job and be a writer." He thought I was crazy . . . But [I] said, "No. This is what I really want to do." (D, p. 12)

Unlike Sandi, Diane was much stronger, and added, "He knew that if I made up my mind he was powerless to say anything" (D, p. 12). However, she added, "I don't think he was very supportive . . . But then when I actually started getting paid for writing he was saying, 'Oh gee, I guess there's something to this'" (D, p. 13). When she told her brother, she said, "he didn't quite know what to make of it. He said, 'So let me get this straight--it's like doing homework? And you get paid for this?'" (D, p. 13).

Both Barbara and Amy had supportive families from the beginning, which helped sustain them in their entrepreneurial endeavours. Neither Diane nor Sandi enjoyed such support, yet both of these women continued to sustain their journeys, without letting go of their dream.

Desire to continue the journey. Some surprising differences among the women emerged in relation to their desire to continue the journey. In the first 10 minutes of the

interview, Amy told me, "I am not sure that I will stay in this . . . I can't see myself in this in 6 years time, or 4 years time, possibly 3 years time" (A, p. 23). She honestly admitted, "I think this had to be the most difficult thing I have every done in my life is open this store . . . I don't know if I would ever do it again . . . I wouldn't franchise again" (A, p. 33). Later she openly declared,

> You have to know when to get off the boat. You have to know when to sell out. If you wait too long you have lost your chance. There are windows to look at and you really do have to take advantage of those windows. And move on. (A, p. 47)

She did soften these statements with, "I am really not sorry I have done this" (A, p. 51). But she added later, "You have to give up a lot. I didn't realize it at the time growing up. I do, looking back. . . . You have to work for what you want" (A, p. 52). By the end of the interview, she decisively told me, "This year will be the deciding fact: do I continue or not?" (A, p. 54). Her final words indicated her decreasing desire to continue in her chosen journey: "If it feels wrong, get out" (A, p. 57).

Barbara also debated whether she should continue her chosen entrepreneurial journey when she said, "If you have a good month, maybe you can take some time off . . . And you don't have a regular income. So those things are seeming more important now than they did even 6 months ago to me" (B, p. 27). She indicated, "Your priorities shift . . . I'll always be a business person and probably have other ventures a couple of years down the line, even if I do work for somebody else for a few years. It will be sort of back and forth" (B, p. 27). By the end of the interview, she honestly admitted,

> I don't have any kids and I have always been career minded. It has always been really clear for me. But I can only do something full tilt for 3 ½ years and then I

> get really bored. I don't even do the 5-year thing. That is way too long for me. That is why now I am looking at making changes here and see what happens . . . we'll either wind it down, or sell it, or carry it on. (B, p. 4l)

Diane, on the other hand, had had full time job offers, but said, "I wouldn't see why I would leave [the business] . . . I am just not interested. What would I do? You either work for someone else or not work at all. I can't afford to not work at all" (D, p. 25). Diane wanted to continue her entrepreneurial journey because she knew her clients "were very satisfied with the work I had done. That made me feel good" (D, p. 24). Sandi also indicated that she had had many outside opportunities. For example, "The collagen company offered me a job going internationally . . . that would be fine if I didn't have children, but I do have children" (S, p. 25). She firmly stated, "My priority is my children" (S, p. 25). She indicated that she was currently "developing my services by being good at what I do" (S, p. 26). She confided that when she worked for the hospital, "I was worried that I could lose my job . . . I've been approached by so many people to work full time and I wouldn't do it--you couldn't pay me enough to do it" (S, p. 27). Sandi certainly was not thinking of discontinuing her journey because she was having a good time. She told me, "I enjoy it [the business] so much, and I don't worry anymore. I don't worry" (S, p. 27).

While all four women had agreed to participate in a study about entrepreneurial success, by the time of the interviews, only two of them indicated a definite desire to continue to sustain their journey. The remaining two had doubts about their desire to continue in the entrepreneurial experience.

Summary of Contextual Elements

The first contextual element, the impetus for beginning the entrepreneurial journeys, differed amongst the four women in the study. Barbara and Amy, the shop owners, had felt the tug to begin their journey for quite some time. Sandi and Diane had been pushed into beginning their respective journeys by external circumstances, having not considered it at the outset of their initial careers.

Once the journey had begun, personal control was an important contextual element. Each of the entrepreneurs acknowledged a certain euphoria in being her own boss. They all experienced freedom of choice and they felt in control of their future.

Outcomes, the third contextual element, involved service and profitability. Sandi and Amy were trained nurses who demonstrated a caring concern for their clients or customers, and in doing so, provided excellent service. Barbara and Diane were from the world of commerce where they learned to discern clients' needs and to satisfy them, thus giving excellent service in their respective ventures. The issue of profitability differed between the shopkeepers and the home businesswomen. Barbara and Amy both discussed the lack of profitability, while Sandi and Diane made enough money that they did not think too much about the financial side of the journey.

Sustainability, the fourth contextual theme, revolved around three issues: balance, moral support, and the desire to continue the journey. While each of them struggled to find balance between home and work, they all indicated that it was ultimately worthwhile. Supported by entrepreneurial families, both Amy and Barbara were almost destined to begin an entrepreneurial journey. Despite having no such support and

certainly not destined to pursue such a journey, nevertheless Diane and Barbara were enjoying their entrepreneurial experiences. In fact, when it came to the issue of continuing the chosen entrepreneurial journey, it was Diane and Barbara who both indicated that they had no notion of discontinuing it. Amy and Barbara, on the other hand, both implied that they might discontinue their respective journeys soon.

Operational Elements of the Entrepreneurial Journey

The second of the two major themes that emerged from the inductive analysis was that of operational elements involved in the entrepreneurial journey. This term referred to the actual running of the business. The topics that emerged within the operational elements were hours of operation and need for employees, inventory, business site, and promotion of the business. Interestingly, each issue fell into one of two groups, with Sandi and Diane, the home businesswomen, clustered in one group and Amy and Barbara, the shopkeepers, clustered in the other group. These themes provide the framework for the following presentation of the operational elements.

Hours of Operation and Need for Employees

The hours of operation and required help were different for the two groups of women. Amy's franchise dictated that her hours of operation were from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. daily, including Sundays and holidays. It was her idea to "put together a binder for all of the staff . . . It is just all the rules, regulations, everything about all the coffee, about everything in the store, the close, the opening, and in between, the machines, whatever" (A, p. 28). She worked at building and motivating a better team. For example, she gave current employees a chance to "have a say in who I hire. Everybody works with that person on a shift, sits down with me at the end of the shift,

and I say 'how did you make out?'" (A, p. 42). If staff had problems on the line together, she encouraged them by saying, "Well, you know, I haven't seen that, but you have, so you work on it. You figure it out" (A, p. 42). She added, "I leave it to them; I'll step in if I have to" (A, p. 43). Amy's "labour was 95% of our take per month" (A, p. 37) when she opened with 17 employees, and 18 months later was "at about 20% for labour [with] 11 employees – my daughter and I don't count" (A, p. 37). For a payroll period that included statutory holidays, Amy told me, "my payroll goes from $4,000 to $10,000 for a 2-week period. It's a lot of money. Especially with the hours here. We are opened 18 hours a day" (A, p. 37).

While Barbara set her own shop hours, she was open daily and at least one evening to draw customers in, although she did decide to close on Sundays and holidays. Like Amy, Barbara could not run the shop all those hours by herself. When Barbara initially opened, she told me,

> The first person I started with was a friend--a good friend--who didn't really have any retail experience . . . when it came to bringing in the dough, I was doing 90% of the sales. She was doing 10%. I was actually paying her probably a lot more than I was paying myself because I paid her monthly. I wouldn't take money unless there was extra money sitting in the bank. (B, p. 19)

Barbara had to fire her friend. She later hired another woman "who had been in the business for years, but the computer system completely confounded her, [and] she didn't really know the merchandise that well" (B, pp. 20- 21). Afterwards Barbara carefully

selected a woman

> with a lot of background, [and] an interior designer [who] knows how to sell because she is in people's homes . . . she is out there hustling . . . she brings in tons of business too . . . So those two are great . . . and I think that is all the staff I need. (B, p. 21-22)

Diane and Sandi had completely different circumstances. Sandi kept flexible hours during the week because she traveled as a sales representative. However, she was always available through her answering service and cellular phone. She had no employees. Diane had no staff either, and told me, "I can't imagine that because I would have to move into an office and that's a whole other thing. And I don't see that happening" (D, p. 23). If she had too much work to handle, Diane advised me, "I would sub-contract it. I've done that before. If I have a big writing job, I will give a piece of it to somebody else" (D, p. 24). In theory, Diane's hours were 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays. However, she could be flexible because she could leave the office and let the answering machine take messages while she attended meetings or her children's functions. Alternatively, she added, "If I am getting dressed in the morning and the office phone rings, maybe I'll pick it up. It depends on what time it is and where I am going" (D, p. 26). When asked if she worked on weekends, Diane admitted, "There is the odd time when that would happen, but not on a regular basis" (D, p. 30). She added, "If I'm really busy--there was a period last year where I would work every Saturday morning from 8 to 10" (D, p. 30). In short, because these women were single-employee home

businesswomen, their work schedules were far more flexible and adaptive than were those of Amy and Barbara.

Inventory

The need for turning inventory varied according to the nature of the venture. Both shopkeepers – Amy and Barbara – had inventory to worry about. Barbara told me,

> There are a lot of aspects to retail – you know, inventory being a large part of it. Managing inventory is a very tough thing for anybody. I talk to friends in manufacturing and they say that is probably the single most difficult part of business because you really have to kind of see the future to get the right mix. After being in business for a couple of years it becomes a little more obvious what sells. (B, p. 17)

Barbara indicated how quickly an entrepreneur could get into trouble with suppliers when she divulged,

> Paying the suppliers on time – I was really diligent the first year and a half or so, but you get a little behind. You have one bad month – it really, really puts you behind. Never to the point that I have been in danger of going out of business or going bankrupt . . . The worse I would owe is about $20,000 total. (B, p. 31)

Barbara also indicated that even if she seemed to be making a lot of sales, she would be behind in paying suppliers. "It should not be a problem, but it seems to be" (B, p. 31), she added. Unlike Barbara, Amy did not have 15 years in business, and she confided, "Honestly, it scares me because there is a lot of coffee being sold here to cover the expenses per month, but it is not enough. I don't know. I really don't know" (A, p. 46). She indicated that "It is anywhere from $35,000 to $50,000 a month to keep a coffee

house running" (A, p. 36). Then she added, "Coffee is very expensive . . . depending on the month--somewhere between $7,000 and $10,000 a month just in beans" (A, p. 38). She also realized,

> You need a full year or even a year and a half to know what your fluctuations are going to be . . . You are going to know your real peak times and your dead times. And in those peak times you have to be able to pay as much as you can and store as much as you can so when dead times hit you've got cover. And I just learned that. (A, p. 38)

Alternatively, Sandi and Diane did not have to contend with inventory problems in their entrepreneurial journey. In fact, Diane began the interview by stating, "I don't really think of myself as an entrepreneur in the sense some people are when they take a chunk of money and invest it" (D, p. 8). Since she made no big investment, she went on to say, "If it had not worked out I could have just gone to work for someone else and would have lost six month's or a year's salary" (D, p. 9). While Sandi did not have an option to work for someone else during the height of the recession when nurses were being laid off, she also did not have to carry inventory. All she required was a small loan. "I needed $5,000. So what I did, I put in $2,500 and the bank put in $2,500" (S, p. 24) to buy office equipment. As a clinician she was paid consulting fees, and as a collagen sales representative, she told me "I am only paid for the 2 days that I work for Collagen . . . I'm working as an independent agent for this company" (S, p. 26). For Diane and Sandi, then, there was no worry about turning inventory in their home-based business, while for Amy and Barbara it was a constant concern to keep their shops well stocked.

Business Site

The cost of setting up and maintaining a separate business location from their home was an issue that only Amy and Barbara had to contend with from the outset of the entrepreneurial journey. Amy exclaimed,

> A lot goes into these franchises. A lot of loans. Almost $400,000 to purchase this. And that doesn't include your inventory. It doesn't include your staff. It doesn't include anything. That is just the name. Then you pay 11% to keep the name--per month." (A, p. 44)

In addition, immediately upon moving into the premises, Amy had a 24-hour security system installed because "this is store front. We don't have security here . . . we are not in a mall where guards are going by" (A, p. 30). Although Barbara did not buy a franchise, she had to set up expensive displays in her rented space. She hired the women who sewed window coverings and soft furniture for her commercial clients to make samples for her shop. She defrayed display costs in some interesting ways. For example, she kept a photo album with pictures of window treatments. Barbara explained,

> Some are projects I have done. I only do commercial projects. I don't do any sewing for residential customers. So most are commercial projects that I did and some are pictures that customers have brought me that I asked them to bring in . . . I say to customers quite often, "When it is done, can you bring me a picture of it . . . and I'll put it in my album." . . . And some of them I have taken myself at customer's homes when I have stopped by. . . . That is a really good thing to show people. (B, p. 24)

While Barbara had been in the same location for three years, she found that

> Renegotiating my lease this year was just ugly; it went on for months. They wanted to give a huge increase, which I thought was ridiculous. If they got the increase they wanted, then my business was instantly not viable. I had to point out to them very forcefully that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush . . . They just couldn't quite get a grip on that concept so we just battled back and forth and ended up having a small increase. It still was not what I wanted. I didn't want any increase at all. I wanted them to lower it a little bit. So that was nasty. (B, p. 34)

Meanwhile, Sandi and Diane both worked from a home office. Diane turned a bedroom into an upstairs office where, she told me, "I have my own cubicle" (D, p. 25). She equipped it with an excellent computer system, a fax machine, and an extra phone line. Sandi spread her desk and computer equipment in separate areas of her basement, and as a freelance consultant simply walked into a well-designed clinic with superior equipment, where she said, "It was really a win/win situation for both of us [the surgeon and herself]" (S, p.21). There were beautifully appointed offices where she displayed her degree and certificates. In short, because these businesswomen worked from the home they had little site cost in comparison to Barbara and Amy who had to rent shop space.

Promotion of the Business

The final issue under operational elements involved the way in which these two groups of entrepreneurs promoted their respective businesses. Amy and Barbara constantly advertised their enterprises to attract customers. Both women had a file filled with publicity. Amy told me,

> I do a lot of my own advertising as well. You can't just go by what this franchise does. . . . I have done radio. . . . I do the . . . coupon books. . . . I have done a lot through the BIA where I have put flyers into their handout. (A, p. 34)

She added, "I couldn't keep track of all the functions I have joined . . . I think that is part of the community – a very costly thing" (A, p. 34). Barbara mentioned changing her advertising from the local paper to something broader such as the Toronto Star because then she could

> Draw from quite a broad area. I think I would get more out of my money, my advertising dollar, than just in the local papers. If I could do both [advertise locally and regionally] I would, but I can't, so I might try that for a few months this spring to see what will happen. (B, p. 25)

In addition, she also had "customers coming in from sports organizations that I am in . . . I do it on purpose. They were on my mailing list and everybody sort of flogs that baseball list" (B, p. 22).

Diane and Sandi had a different approach to promoting their entrepreneurial ventures. When Diane was asked how she moved her business forward, she answered,

> That's a hard one. Sometimes I feel I'm not moving forward. I'm sort of in the status quo . . . Sometimes you can be proactive to do it and other times it just falls in your lap, so I'm not always at work moving things forward. They just move regardless of what I do. (D, p. 22)

Diane added,

> I go to these networking meetings . . . You go there. You show your face. Everyone gets a chance to introduce him or herself. You give a 30 second little

> commercial. So you do that. So when people think writer, they think of you. Then I have my newsletter--I mail it out. I bring it with me . . . Really it is the networking more than anything else is. (D, p. 23)

She also remembered, "I sent out a survey, in October I guess, to regular clients to see how satisfied they were with my work . . . now this is where we are talking about a sample group of them, 8" (D, p. 24). Meanwhile, Sandi realized she had many opportunities. She told me, "I had different laser companies where I knew the guys well. So I put out feelers saying, 'Why don't you hire me as a consultant?'" (S, p. 20) She was hired and soon was self-supporting. As a sales representative, she handled her clients with skill and confidence, often joking with them. For example, she told a physician, "I'll have 2 kids in university [next year]. That's why you have to buy this product from me--Help me out!" (S, p. 5). At the time of the interview, Sandi indicated that "I am growing my business internally in that I am asking for percentages now. My business associates see the revenue I generate" (S, p. 26). These two entrepreneurs handled most of their own promotion, with very little expense involved, compared to the two shopkeepers.

Summary of Operational Elements

When I originally chose these four women, I had planned on having two whose customers came to them, namely Amy and Barbara, and two who had to seek out their clients, namely Diane and Sandi. As I observed and interviewed them it proved interesting that many of the differences were clustered into these two distinct groups, particularly under the theme, operational elements.

The first operational element included the issues of hours and employees. Amy and Barbara had inflexible hours, and required employees to help them cover the hours. On the other hand, Diane and Sandi had flexible hours and neither one of them indicated a desire or a need for employees. Inventory, the second operational element, proved to be a major financial concern for Amy and Barbara, while Diane and Sandi did not have to worry about supplies. The third operational element was business site. Sandi and Diane had little overhead expense because they did not have to rent space or buy into a franchise. Amy and Barbara, however, paid a high price for their space, whether they had customers or not.

The fourth operational element was promotion of the business. Both Sandi and Diane spent little money on promoting their venture. They had to think about what archival materials they even had available to demonstrate promotion because it was mostly just word of mouth. However, Barbara and Amy budgeted advertising dollars to attract customers to their shops. Both of them had no problem discussing massive amounts of publicity they either had kept or had not even bothered to cut out of the paper.

Integration of the Elements

Results indicated that the personal, contextual, and operational elements were integrated in the entrepreneurial journey. The data did not indicate that these three elements operated individually. Each entrepreneur clearly demonstrated that all three elements were in place during the observation period. For example, Sandi's drive and persistence (personal elements) resulted in keeping the appointment with the doctor the day of the snowstorm. During the appointment she provided caring concern for the patient (contextual element) as she demonstrated the collagen injection treatment to the

doctor. She also promoted her business by asking the doctor to place an order so she could pay for her children's university tuition (operational element).

The three elements and their characteristics were delineated on a chart (see Table 3). This chart provided easier summarization of the findings. However, in reality, the elements combined in such a way that they converged with one another (see Figure 1). This graphic representation illustrated an overlapping of the elements. Clearly, various characteristics within these three elements combined, or blended, at once to play a role in the entrepreneur's day, at any given moment.

Table 3

Three Major Elements That Play A Role In The Entrepreneurial Journey

Elements	Characteristics
Personal Elements	
Skills	Technical Human Administrative
Attitudes	Drive Persistence Ambiguity
Personality Traits	Creative Innovative
Sociological Conditions	Gender Educational Background Age Childhood Background
Contextual Elements	
Impetus for Beginning Journey	"Pull" "Push"
Personal Control	
Outcome of Journey	Service Profitability
Sustainability of the Journey	Balance Moral Support Desire to Continue the Journey
Operational Elements	Hours of Operation Need for Employees Inventory Business Site Promotion of Business

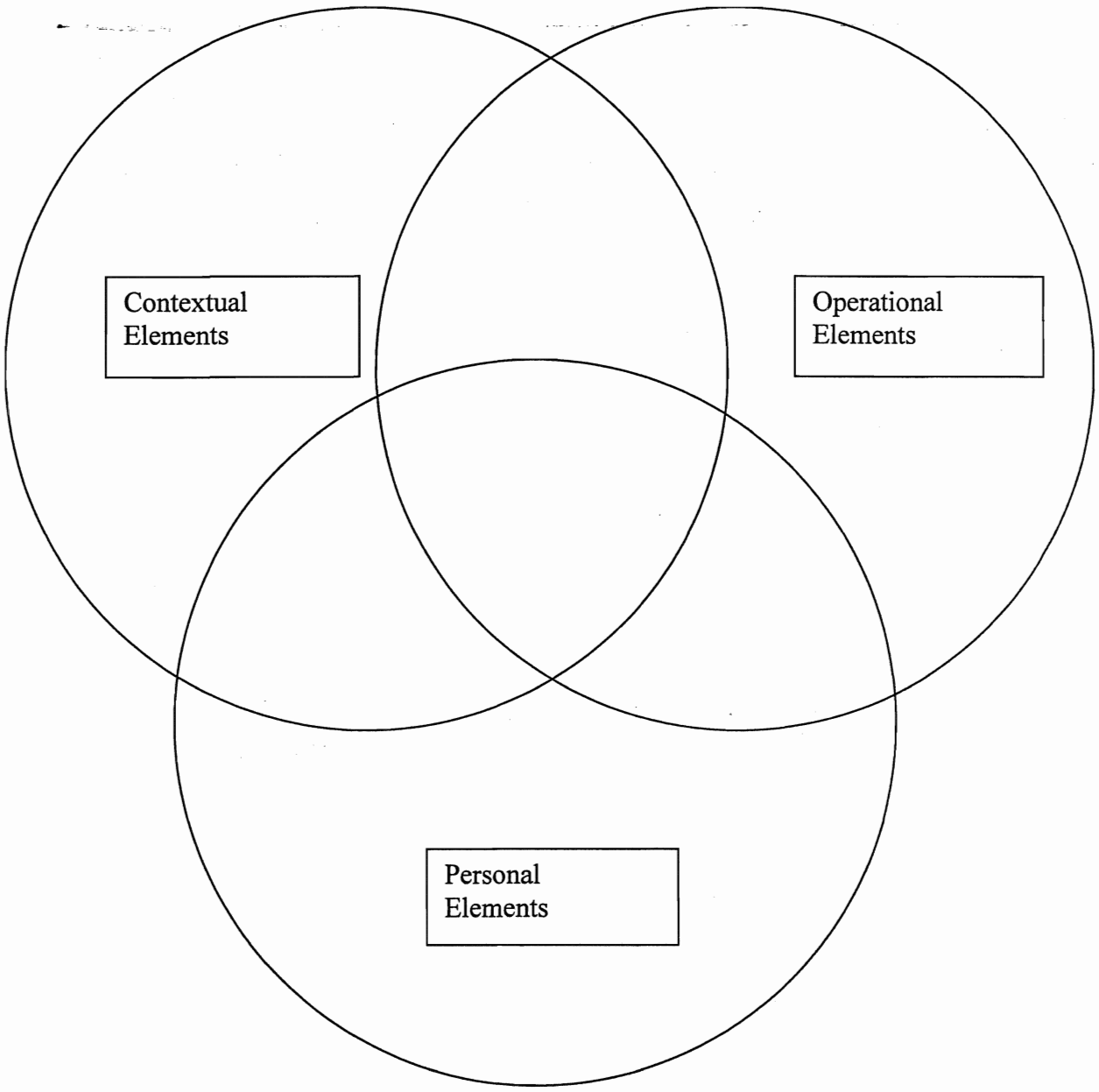

Figure 1. Integration of the Three Elements

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter of the thesis begins with a summary of the exploration of the entrepreneurial phenomenon. A discussion highlighting the interesting or contradictory findings of the research follows the summary. Ramifications of the study are outlined under implications for theory and for education. Suggestions and guidelines are provided for future research. The chapter ends with personal reflections of the search.

Summary

The study began with an exploration of four personal elements that combined to play a role in entrepreneurial success. These four elements were skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions. The basic premise of the search was that by identifying the group of personal elements that underlie the success of the entrepreneur, we could begin to understand the meaning of the entrepreneurial experience. Prior studies had often focused on one category of personal elements, such as personality traits (e.g., Nystrom, 1993). It seemed likely that a combination of categories could suggest a more holistic notion of what might predict entrepreneurial success. A problem with the initial question was the word success, since it can mean something different to many people. To choose participants for the study, I defined a successful entrepreneur as someone who had started a new venture based on a creative idea, and had continued in business for at least a year.

The decision to explore the lives of Canadian women was in response to Campbell's (1994) challenge to focus more research on Canadian females. The choice of asking four women to participate was based on Helgesen's (1995) qualitative study of four successful American businesswomen. While her investigation contrasted two types

of businesswomen, entrepreneurs and corporate executives, I concentrated exclusively on entrepreneurs. However, there was a contrast in this exploration between two entrepreneurs who seek clients and two whose clients come to them. Amy owned a coffee shop franchise, and Barbara owned a retail fabric shop. Diane was a freelance writer, and Sandi was a health care consultant and a collagen sales representative.

To gain some insight into how Amy, Barbara, Diane, and Sandi constructed their workdays, I spent a day observing each of them. I then interviewed them individually, using open-ended questions to which they each responded easily, often providing anecdotes that added richness to their stories. In addition, they were pleased to show me photo albums, file folders of promotions, pictures, surveys, and newsletters that provided a clearer understanding of the entrepreneurial phenomenon.

Data were initially coded based on the group of four personal elements that seemed to be part of their success: skills, attitudes, traits, and sociological conditions. Next, data were analyzed inductively by grouping and categorizing similar data units. The categorizations, which were based on the two groups of entrepreneurs, provided an interesting pattern of similarities and differences. At this time the problem with defining success was resolved. The data suggested that the question was not so much about entrepreneurial success for these four women, as it was about taking an entrepreneurial journey as part of their life experience.

It was Sandi who told me that she thought of her life in terms of taking a metaphorical journey. Dooley (1998) explained that a metaphor acts as a "linguistic expression" (p. 100) of a concept "that can bridge the gap between theory and practice" (p. 105). This new insight led to a different way of thinking about entrepreneurs and a

modification of the initial focus on success. Using the metaphor of a journey to discuss the entrepreneurial venture seemed to be a powerful tool for describing the experience in terms that would more authentically reflect the expressions of these women.

Results indicated that for Amy, Barbara, Diane, and Sandi, a group of personal elements played a role in the entrepreneurial journey from the outset. This constellation of personal elements provided them with the conviction that they could open their own businesses. Technical, human, and administrative skills were each confirmed by all four as being important when starting the new venture. Tolerance for ambiguity, determination, and drive were attitudes that these women initially demonstrated in their businesses. Creativity and innovation were interwoven in all four of them, and they each provided an anecdote that demonstrated the presence of both traits from the inception of the business. Age, education, and gender of these four women validated prior studies concerning sociological conditions of beginning entrepreneurs. However, only two of the women had entrepreneurial parents who modeled this type of business lifestyle.

Inductive data analysis indicated that the personal elements were embedded in contextual and operational elements for all of the participants. Contextual elements formed the backdrop for the new enterprise, and included impetus for beginning the journey, personal control, outcomes, and sustainability. The configuration of these contextual elements gave meaning to their daily experiences as entrepreneurs. Operational elements were the details attached to running a business, including hours of operation, employees, inventory, business site, and promotion of business. This constellation of operational elements was how they "took care of business," and turned out to be the determining factor of whether they continued the entrepreneurial journey or

terminated it. Results indicated that it was a combination of personal, contextual, and operational elements that played a role in their respective entrepreneurial journeys.

Discussion

In looking at the themes generated by the analysis of the data, I began to understand the entrepreneurial experience through the use of a metaphor of a journey. Several points strike me as important for further consideration.

It seems clear that from the beginning of the journey, for all four entrepreneurs, many of the personal elements were in place. These women demonstrated the necessity of having specific personal elements to set out on the entrepreneurial trek. Their skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions were similar to the findings already reported in the literature.

The notion of personal control was important to these women and turned out to be a significant contextual piece. That is surprising because in Kee and Chye's (1993) study, personal control was a non-discriminatory characteristic between those traders who were successful and those who were less successful. So I dropped personal control as a discriminatory skill. Then it turned out in the narrative that personal control was important and helped keep the entrepreneurs looking forward regardless of how they were defining success. Interestingly, both Amy and Barbara had this desire to control their own destiny even before either of them opened their shops. On the other hand, neither Sandi nor Diane had the same desire to have personal control at the beginning of their respective journeys, but once they began to make money, they too enjoyed controlling their professional careers.

It is surprising that only Barbara's age at the outset of her journey and her desire

to open an entrepreneurial business prior to a milestone year was reminiscent of Hisrich and Peters' (1992) study. These American researchers found that American women tended to begin their entrepreneurial journey in their mid to late thirties; only Barbara was 6 months away from the age of 35 when she opened her shop. Sandi was 44, while Diane and Amy were in their early thirties at the outset of their business ventures. Hisrich and Peters also suggested that there are milestone years (e.g., 25, 30, 35, 40...) when Americans begin this journey with a "now or never" attitude. Only Barbara admitted to that feeling as the age of 35 loomed ahead of her. It is notable that these findings with respect to age and milestone years at the onset of the trek were similar to the American statistics in only one case.

Surprisingly, this study was dissimilar to Reuber's (1994) findings that having entrepreneurial parents leads to a higher sales growth. Both Diane and Sandi had the higher sales growth, as compared to Amy and Barbara, who had entrepreneurial parents. Amy and Barbara also depended on banks and families to support their ventures. Diane and Sandi, on the other hand, did not have the entrepreneurial lifestyle as a model in their formative years, yet solely supported their respective families.

Both at the inauguration of the journey and afterwards, the contextual elements provided meaning for the entrepreneurs. An examination of the individual contextual elements indicated a greater contrast than expected between the two groups of participants in the study. The impetus for opening their own businesses was one contextual element that seemed divided along the lines of a "push" or "pull" into the entrepreneurial journey. Amit and Muller (1995, p. 64) defined "push" entrepreneurs as those whose dissatisfaction with their positions, for reasons unrelated to their

entrepreneurial characteristics, pushes them to start a venture, while "pull" entrepreneurs are those who initiate venture activity because of the attractiveness of the business idea and its personal implications.

Shopkeepers Amy and Barbara were "pulled" into opening their enterprises, although both had well-paying jobs working for other people. Both of them had always wanted to run their own business, just like their parents had before them. Yet the two of them indicated they were not happy on their journey. Both women disclosed frustration with their respective enterprises. They also discussed their dissatisfaction with the lack of funds.

Meanwhile, the other two entrepreneurs in this study were "pushed" into their respective journeys due to the loss of a job for Sandi and the loss of a parent for Diane. While neither one had had any desire to run her own shop before these external forces had such an impact on their lives, both demonstrated boundless enthusiasm for their respective journeys. Each indicated that she had more work than she wanted to accept. Neither one of them displayed much frustration with their specific setting. These findings are surprising in light of Amit and Muller's (1995) indication that "'pull' entrepreneurs are generally more successful than 'push' entrepreneurs" (p. 64). While this qualitative research revolved around the journeys of four entrepreneurs rather than around their success, the two "pushed" into the journey seemed happier and desirous of continuing their chosen journeys than the two "pulled" into the journey. In short, the two home businesswomen who were pushed into their new ventures found more meaning in the entrepreneurial experience, compared to the two shopkeepers who were pulled into the entrepreneurial journey.

Surprisingly, both groups of entrepreneurs addressed the balance between the homefront and the workplace. Not surprisingly, however, the major differences amongst the four women in this study were divided in terms of the two groups. For shopkeepers Amy and Barbara, finding a balance proved to be stressful. They are not alone. Krahn and Lowe (1993) state, "when the Conference Board of Canada surveyed 11,000 employees across Canada in 1988-89, it discovered that two-thirds had some difficulty balancing work and family" (p. 160). Barbara admitted to having hit a low point the previous summer and still felt anxious that her personal life was suffering. Amy, a single parent, knew her family life had deteriorated, but felt she had to put the business first to continue her entrepreneurial journey. Krahn and Lowe quoted Hochschild in reference to the work-family conflict:

> work has changed. Women have changed . . . This strain between the change in women and the absence of change in much else leads me to speak of a stalled revolution. Perhaps the most pervasive consequence of this stalled revolution is the rise of job-family conflict. (p. 159)

Both shopkeepers revealed their struggles as they attempted to find a balance between their domestic and professional lives.

On the other hand, Sandi and Diane seemed close to achieving a balance. As a single mother, Sandi took separate vacations with each of her three children, and, as an entrepreneur, had an excellent working relationship with both the clinic and the collagen company. Diane had trained her children not to interrupt her while in her home office, yet she let the answering service take any calls when she had a function to attend with her

children. In their case, both Diane and Sandi seemed to confirm Schwarz's (1992) observation:

> Social change, driven by demography, education, and prosperity, begets value change . . . The baby boomers and women bring new values and attitudes about work, family life, and society to . . . business. The new value shift centers around time, quality, self-fulfillment, children, and general satisfaction with life. (p. 143)

As they continued on their journey, Sandi and Diane seemed to have achieved a balance between their personal and business lives by establishing specific values and working to maintain them.

An interesting corollary to this discussion about balance involves the entrepreneur's multifaceted roles while continuing the journey. Clearly all four women had multiple roles, but, again, Sandi and Diane seemed to move between the roles more easily than Amy and Barbara. This notion of multiple roles was addressed in Helgesen's (1995) study of business leaders, who

> viewed their jobs as just one element of who they were. Other aspects of their lives simply took up too much time to permit total identification with their careers. "Raising two kids alone, how could I forget that I'm a mom and a manager?" asked [one entrepreneur]. (p. 26)

One of Helgesen's (1995) entrepreneurs summed it up: "It's not as if I'm different people. I'm just playing up different parts of who I am" (p.27). All four women addressed this notion of being more than the owner of a business. Sandi and Diane set timelines that they followed so they could do an excellent job for their clients while leaving time to enjoy life with their respective families. However, Barbara found that her

job encroached more on her personal life than she had planned, while Amy seemed slightly overwhelmed by the daunting chore of having to be head of the household as well as head of the shop. Moving easily from one role to another while on the entrepreneurial journey proved more difficult for the shopkeepers than for the other two women.

A critical skill that emerged was the ability of multi-tasking. All four entrepreneurs demonstrated their ability to handle more than one job at a time. Amy could clean tables while carrying on a conversation with several customers at a time, yet be aware of the need to run back to the counter to serve more customers. Barbara could continue to cut fabric for one customer while answering her portable phone, and then give advice to yet another customer on customized blinds. Diane shifted easily from writing a news bulletin for one client to writing a newsletter for another client while waiting for telephone calls to update information for the bulletin. Sandi froze one patient for collagen injections, chatted to another client about having laser treatment, and then moved on to discuss varicose veins with another patient, all within the matter of a very few minutes. All four of these businesswomen demonstrated amazing capability of juggling many jobs at once.

The skill of multi-tasking was not addressed in Herron's (1994) study of seven skills of the entrepreneur. The multi-tasking skill was also not discussed in the studies by Katz (1974) and Szilagyi and Schweiger (1984) in the strategic management literature. While Helgesen (1995) certainly described the multiple roles each woman held, she also did not discuss multiple tasking skills amongst these women. It might have been in other reports. Perhaps it is assumed that multi-tasking is a required prerequisite to be an

entrepreneur, but perhaps it is a new skill emerging in a rapid-paced workplace. In this study all four women handled multiple tasks, which suggests that it is one of the critical skills for the New Economy and one that deserves further research. It was an obvious skill that all of these entrepreneurs had cultivated. It was their ability to multi-task that kept the four businesswomen functioning effectively on a daily basis.

The data suggest that, as the journey continued for all four women, the operational elements, or the inner workings of the enterprise, appeared to be the determinants of whether to continue the journey or to terminate it. In this study these elements clearly defined the division between the two groups. Details such as having employees, turning inventory, and maintaining a business site proved to be major roadblocks in Amy's and Barbara's journeys. Diane and Sandi, on the other hand, did not contend with any of these operational costs. In a subsequent review after conducting the data analysis, I read Williamson (1993), a Canadian entrepreneurial business consultant. He suggested that having employees, inventory, and a business site might lead to terminating a new venture. He stressed that "one of the largest expenses in small business is usually that relating to employees. These costs come in a number of guises" (p. 173). Amy's 11 part-time staff drained her profits, especially when statutory holidays dictated overtime salaries. Barbara's major staffing problem was finding qualified personnel who could sell the merchandise; this took its toll on her personally. In short, only the shopkeepers had to contend with the expenses and the difficulties of hiring good employees.

Williamson (1993) stated that "Inventory is like cash. Make sure it works for you!" (p. 159). He then discussed three key ingredients to successful inventory

management, including knowing the minimum amount of inventory required, knowing how long it takes suppliers to deliver, and buying in quantity. Both Amy and Barbara were trying to practice these keys to success, but still experienced cash flow problems. In bad months, such as January for Amy and February for Barbara, sales did not equal the accounts payable. In summary, only the shopkeepers had to contend with the worry, the hardship, and the expense of carrying inventory.

Williamson (1993) stated that "overheads can certainly be reduced by working out of your home or apartment" (p. 139). While Amy's franchise dictated where her business site was located, Barbara had chosen her own site away from home. Both women watched much of their profits go into continuing their entrepreneurial journey just in the location alone. Meanwhile, "the National Home Business Institute has estimated that 3.6 million Canadians work out of their homes. This represents about 30% of Canada's labour force" (Williamson, p. 140). Furthermore, to make it seem worse for shopkeepers like Amy and Barbara, "there are some tax advantages if you use part of your residence as your principal place of business! You can use the rent relating to that business area as a legitimate business expense" (Williamson, p. 140). Neither of these women had this tax advantage. In short, once again, the shopkeepers had to cut into their profits to pay for a business site.

This study provides insight into Williamson's (1993) claim that having employees, inventory, and a business site can have a detrimental effect on the venture. Indeed, the two women who had to contend with all of these issues were both considering the possibility of terminating the journey. For Amy and Barbara, it just might not be profitable enough to continue the journey.

For the participants of this study the entrepreneurial journey involved three major elements: personal, contextual, and operational. The personal elements tended to usher individuals into the journey. The contextual elements caused them to vacillate between deciding to continue the journey or disbanding it. Finally, the operational elements seemed to be the deciding components that either encouraged entrepreneurs to continue the journey or dissuaded them from enduring it.

In this study, there was a distinct difference in entrepreneurial journeys. The division is drawn between the shopkeepers, Amy and Barbara, and the home office businesswomen, Diane and Sandi. Both shopkeepers chose careers in two difficult sectors, as Cook (1989) explained:

> The restaurant business and retailing in general experience higher failure rates than most other types of business. In some sectors of retailing, failure rates approximate one-half to three-quarters of 1 percent of all such establishments, compared to one-quarter of 1 percent for business in general. (p. 246)

Cook's observation indicates that there is a distinct possibility that both Amy and Barbara may not continue with their specific businesses. In their case, a combination of contextual and operational elements may conspire to cause them to discontinue their journeys. However, it is worth noting that all four entrepreneurs had the combination of personal elements that led them into the entrepreneurial journey.

Implications for Theory

Before formulating the initial question, I wondered what group of characteristics might be associated with the success of an entrepreneur. Theorists (e.g., Schumpeter, 1934; Reynolds, 1991, Manimala, 1993; Jurcova, 1996) could not agree on a definition

for entrepreneur. Depending upon what field of expertise they came from, that was the lens they looked through to describe an entrepreneur. Most researchers (e.g., Nystrom, 1993; Kee & Chye, 1993) focused on one set of personal characteristics that seemed to be associated with the entrepreneur's success. However, each researcher suggested a different set of personal characteristics. It seemed, then, that there was more than one set of characteristics involved in the entrepreneurial phenomenon. The initial purpose of this study was to explore the role played by a combination of these groups of personal elements that might affect the new venturer's success.

The term "success" was found in much of the entrepreneurial literature. However, the women in this study rarely used the term when discussing their businesses. Perhaps, I reasoned, they did not discuss success because it was understood that achieving success would be a motive for opening a business. The more significant detail seemed to be that all four had begun a metaphorical journey into entrepreneurship.

The constructs of the journey metaphor emerged as a framework supporting the notion of an integrated group of elements that play a role in the new venture. The personal elements pertaining to the entrepreneurial journey, as described in the literature, turned out to be the combination of components that were the rationale for each of the four women starting the journey. But personal elements did not stand alone once the journey began. Contextual elements were important to the meaning of these businesswomen's lives both at the beginning of the journey and as it progressed. These contextual components had the potential to make the entrepreneurial journey difficult or to smooth out the path. Operational elements were also part of the journey. These inner workings of the business determined whether the entrepreneurs would continue the

journey or terminate it. Therefore, the data suggest that a combination of personal, contextual, and operational elements plays a role in the entrepreneurial journey.

This notion that a combined group of three major elements affect the entrepreneur's journey differs from past studies that primarily investigated factors impinging on the entrepreneur in isolation (e.g., Abetti, 1993; Begley & Boyd,1987; Herron, 1994; Ise, 1994; Kee & Chye, 1993; Manimala,1992; and Reuber, 1994). In other words, it was as if the various factors influenced the individual single-handedly. This exploration finds the opposite to be true. The three major elements were so integrated that they were regarded as holistically affecting the entrepreneurial journey of each of the four participants. The sentiment that one element acts in isolation to affect the entrepreneurial journey appears to be an over-simplified hypothesis. The theory could be expanded to embrace a synthesis of personal, contextual, and operational elements that, together, affect the entrepreneurial journey.

Implications for Education

Two issues emerge from this study that are relevant for the educator. The first issue is the metaphor of the journey. This metaphor provides an instructional framework around which the instructor can shape an entrepreneurial course. The second issue is the curriculum used to teach the combination of personal, contextual, and operational elements to the students.

The first issue for the educator to consider is to describe the entrepreneurial phenomenon as a metaphorical journey to facilitate communication between educators and students. Dooley (1998) advocated that "metaphors . . . can become powerful tools for evoking changes in beliefs and practice" (p. 105). She added that "future teachers can

develop a greater awareness of the factors influencing their experiences in the classroom when they identify and reflect on the metaphors . . . they use in their conversations" (p. 105). Educators could use this metaphor of a journey to help frame the three major elements affecting the entrepreneurial experience. Before beginning a journey, an individual packs specific items, most of which are probably readily available, but if not, may need to be procured. This is analogous to the personal elements, most of which the aspiring entrepreneur may already possess, but some of which may have to be procured through some training. The packed items will go on the trip, just as the skills, attitudes, personality traits, and sociological conditions will still be part of the entrepreneurial journey once the business is opened.

As the individual begins and continues the journey, many aspects of the trip will be meaningful along the way. There is the potential to have a good trip or a bad trip, but, in either case, it will probably be significant in one way or another. Analogous to the meaningful aspects on a trip, there are the contextual elements of the entrepreneurial journey which create meaning for the new venturer. The impetus for beginning the journey, personal control, outcomes of the journey, and the sustainability of the journey will all provide significance to the entrepreneurial experience.

As the trip continues there are specific details involved in travelling to a destination. For example, there are car rentals, airplane flights, hotel accommodations, meal reservations, and entertainment that must be attended to on the journey. Eventually the traveler may have to terminate the trip if unable to continue to attend to all of these needs. Similarly, the operational elements are the items involved in running the business. The entrepreneur must consider hours of operation, need for employees, inventory,

business site, and promotion of the business. These are the crucial factors that may cause the new venturer to terminate the entrepreneurial journey if unable to meet the requirements due to stress, finances, or exhaustion.

The second issue for the educator to consider when training future entrepreneurs is the curriculum that will enhance their knowledge about the personal, contextual, and operational elements that combine to affect the metaphorical journey. The majority of the components within these three major elements can be taught. Each entrepreneur indicated that she had learned the basics of the elements at some point. It is also worth noting that some of the components may involve upgrading for the entrepreneur since futurists are predicting that continuous training will be required in the new millenium. For example, Schwartz (1992) quoted one futurist as saying, "The jobs performed are changing so rapidly that 50 percent of the jobs being done in 1987 did not exist twenty years earlier, and by 2007 essentially all of the work will be new" (p. 141). More specifically, Ashmore (1996) advocated that currently "teaching entrepreneurship requires a new mindset. It's not just 'office operations' and spreadsheets in the abstract but, ideally, a series of courses taught in a variety of subjects" (p. 36). Ashmore briefly outlined current American entrepreneurship education programs, including one major player, Programs for Acquiring Competence in Entrepreneurship (PACE). PACE, sponsored by the International Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education at the Ohio State University, is a competency-based curriculum for highschool, postsecondary, and adult education levels. Basically, PACE is an aptitude test that measures some personal elements, and addresses some operational elements. However, Ashmore suggested that even with the implementation of such new entrepreneurship models, "there still is a long

way to go" (p. 36) to provide excellent entrepreneurship programs. The following is a brief outline of a suggested curriculum that incorporates the three major elements found in this study to be significant in the entrepreneurial journey.

To assess the personal elements each student has, a trainer could have the class of potential entrepreneurs complete a self-assessment survey. This survey would not be meant necessarily to dissuade anyone. Indeed, it may demonstrate that they do have the necessary personal elements to open a new venture. Alternatively, the survey may also indicate specific elements that students may wish to refine prior to beginning the entrepreneurial journey. Methods of improving some components may involve specialized training, technical resource support, counselling, and/or mentoring.

Next, the trainer may introduce role-play into the curriculum to illustrate the contextual elements that affect the entrepreneurial journey once it has begun. Students would have the opportunity to get a feeling for what the entrepreneurial experience could mean to them. Small groups could explore what their impetus is for beginning the journey, what it means to have personal control of their professional lives, what the outcomes may be in their chosen industry, or what psychological and sociological elements may affect their ability to sustain the journey. For example, students may act out a scene in which they portray an entrepreneur serving customers when his or her son's school calls to say he is ill and needs to come home. Role-playing is a method that could facilitate students' realization of the difficulties that can and do arise in the entrepreneurial journey.

The trainers can also facilitate the students' understanding of the operational elements that affect the entrepreneurial journey. The daily aspects of running a business

with respect to hours of operation, need for employees, inventory, business site, and promotion of business are crucial factors that may result in termination of the journey. Trainers may enlist the help of guest speakers with real experience in the entrepreneurial journey to advise the students on specific problems. For example, someone like Barbara with a degree in business and three years' entrepreneurial background could describe the pitfalls of having inventory and the innovative solutions she had designed over the years. Students could also produce a business plan that would outline hours of operation, need for employees, inventory turnover, location of the business, and promotion of the venture.

Once the three elements have been discussed separately, it is time to integrate them. As part of the curriculum study, students could then design, create and sell either a product or a service. They would need to rely on the personal elements to create and innovate the product or service. As they try to market this product or service, they will soon discover what meaning various contextual aspects have on this experience. They have already drawn up a business plan so in theory they know what the operational elements are, but now they have to find out in practical terms what goes into the daily running of an enterprise, even on a small-scale basis.

Finally, an important section in the curriculum could include training for business analysis. Here the student would be asked to assess the new venture carefully to determine how all three elements might affect it.

Using the journey metaphor and the curriculum outlined above, the three major elements would be taught. Furthermore, the students will come away with the knowledge of how the personal, contextual, and operational elements combine to affect the entrepreneurial experience. This hands-on learning environment, as opposed to a

traditional lecture setting, would provide the students with more freedom to explore these elements on an individual level. This method would help students recognize that these three major elements are integrated in the metaphorical journey of an entrepreneur.

Many of the personal and operational elements are addressed to various degrees in existing Ontario curriculums. For example, in secondary schools, the *Entrepreneurship Studies* (1990) program of the Ontario Ministry of Education, Business Studies, Senior Division, delineates at least 60 percent of the course to develop the personal elements. The remaining 40 percent are devoted mainly to operational aspects of running the business. The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology's *Visions Program* (undated) for grades 7 and 8, has a similar focus. The *Project Business (1988)* program distributed and taught by Junior Achievement of Canada, through partnerships with local schools, has a stronger emphasis on the operational aspects of small business ventures. The contextual element is clearly under emphasized in these three programs. These are old programs; for the most part they were developed in the 1980s or early 1990s. We can reasonably expect that a program developed currently would be different. The results of this study could influence new programs by suggesting a curriculum that balances aspects of the three components.

Furthermore, I would propose a major shift in emphasis in the philosophical foundations upon which current school programs are based. Kourilsky (1990) stated:

> Whereas it is not the goal of schooling to develop an abundance of business entrepreneurs, one may still be curious why 25 percent of kindergartners demonstrate important entrepreneurial characteristics . . . whereas only 3 percent of high school youngsters manifest such talent (Kourilsky, 1977). . . . We suggest,

> that first, the classroom as a society is analogous to a planned economy--it is almost a simulation of a command economy; and, second, convergence and not divergence is disproportionately rewarded in the school experience. (p. 138)

To accomplish this shift, a redesigned program could be created to encourage both divergent thinking skills that address the personal and contextual components, and critical thinking skills that address operational aspects of entrepreneurship.

The educator would need to be flexible in designing and delivering this new program. Currently, the *Entrepreneurship Studies* (1990) program suggests a timeframe for "entrepreneurial attributes" as 10 to 15 percent of the course allotment. In the new program the trainer may assess that the needs of the students are far greater in this area than the allotted time. The proposed curriculum would be flexible enough to allow the trainer to truly cater to the specific needs of the entrepreneurial students, thereby modelling the entrepreneurial lifestyle that the students will develop. Ideally, the teacher would be an accomplished entrepreneur who could relate real-life experiences based on personal challenges with a new venture.

In short, education that captures the spirit of entrepreneurship provides a balanced exploration of all 3 elements. There is sufficient flexibility built into the programs to arrive at the appropriate balance for the individual. The curriculum I propose, with a flexible, balanced emphasis on all three elements, breaks out of a hierarchical controlled atmosphere. It generates a new system that recognizes the unique strengths of individual students and addresses their needs appropriately.

Future Research

The findings from this qualitative study of four entrepreneurs provide an empirical starting point for examining Canadian entrepreneurship. For example, a quantitative study could survey a number of Canadian women entrepreneurs to address the integration and the nature of the personal, contextual, and operational elements.

Additional research is required to address the seemingly inherent difficulties of the operational components that may lead to the termination of the entrepreneurial journey. This information is pertinent especially to those considering a new venture in specific types of businesses, such as retail and restaurant that seem almost destined to fail by the very nature of the venture.

Success was a term used throughout the literature, although there was no definitive definition of the term found. The results of the study suggest that the definition of success is a personal issue. Researching individual definitions of success and exploring how entrepreneurs evaluate their own performance could prove interesting. Moreover, it would be useful for people who want to pursue an entrepreneurial career to define success for themselves. These personal definitions can help individuals set goals and know when they achieve success on their own terms.

The notions of maintaining a balance between the home and the workplace, and acknowledging that they assumed multiple roles, was of prime importance to all four women in this study, as it was in Helgesen's (1995) study of four women. It would be interesting to research whether both male and female entrepreneurs attempt to maintain a balance and to assume various roles within the home and the workplace.

Finally the skill of multi-tasking displayed by each of these entrepreneurs is one that deserves further research. In addition, since all of the entrepreneurs were women, this critical skill set may be gender specific, and worth considering from that perspective. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate whether this is a phenomenon common to both male and female entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

This study is about four women, Amy, Barbara, Diane, and Sandi. All four strived to do and be the best that they could be as entrepreneurs, as women, as people. Each of them shared their struggles and their joys as they dealt with the combination of integrated elements on their respective journeys. Amy and Barbara even admitted that they were considering terminating their journeys because of the inherent operational components. Yet all four of them provided hope for women who want careers in entrepreneurship. None of them was without hope. They all discussed the experience in terms of learning and growing as people on an entrepreneurial journey that was part of a holistic life journey.

In *The Road Less Traveled*, psychiatrist Scott Peck (1985) discussed this holistic life journey in terms of achieving a high level of self-understanding. Peck made no distinction between achieving spiritual growth and mental growth. Amy, Barbara, Diane, and Sandi were also trying to achieve a high level of self-understanding as they grew mentally in their capacity as new venturers. In *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life,* psychologist Thomas Moore (1996) suggested applying the principles of caring for the soul to our everyday environment. Amy, Barbara, Diane, and Sandi did try to care for

their customers, their families, and their own souls as they continued their entrepreneurial journey daily.

Perhaps Sarah Ban Breathnach's (1995) book, *Simple Abundance,* captures the heart of what each of these women was trying to achieve in her own entrepreneurial journey, that is, to find her authentic self. Sandi referenced this book as she described her personal journey from a frightened, depressed, unemployed woman to a confident, joyful entrepreneurial woman. Diane talked about having to become a writer so she "didn't miss the boat," that is, she found this was her life's work. Amy and Barbara may terminate their journeys, but they had learned a lot about their authentic selves. Barbara knew she thrived on spending more time with her husband and family, while Amy knew she needed to work with people. All four women seemed to discover that entrepreneurship was a path on the journey of life that helped them find their authentic selves.

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Appendix A

RULES OF THUMB FOR INNOVATORS

1. Actively and continuously search for new ideas from a wide range of sources.

2. Borrow seminal ideas, but always do at least part of the development internally.

3. Choose projects only if they are intrinsically viable and not just for the external support and resources available with them.

4. Choose projects that suit one's interests, capabilities and vision, and not just because there is an 'opportunity'.

5. Choose partners for their ideological congruence and complementary skills and not just for the money they can contribute.

6. Master the technology of one's business, or if that is not possible, at least familiarize oneself with it.

7. Build the organization's capabilities, especially by having talented people at least for the critical positions.

8. Minimize (initial) investments.

9. Minimize borrowed funds especially in the initial phase.

10. Test for market acceptance before starting full-scale operations.

11. Avoid competition rather than fight it.

12. Start small and grow big organically relying primarily on internally accumulated resources.

13. Reduce risk through information management rather than merely spread it.

14. Establish one's strengths before entering into financial participation or technical collaboration with others.

15. Never compromise on quality. Build the company's image through quality and customer service.

16. Grow by related diversification especially by vertical integration.

17. Change management styles with growth. Grant greater autonomy to the organization.

18. Create a formal network of influence around the enterprise.

19. Do not get stuck with one's successes. Evaluate them critically and learn form them too!

(Manimala, 1993, p. 205)

Appendix B

BROCK UNIVERSITY DEPARMENT OF EDUCATION

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: "The Entrepreneur: Four Personal Factors that Promote Success"

Researchers: Darlene E. Jones

Supervising Professor: Coral Mitchell

Name of Participant:_____

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate will involve the identification of skills, attitudes, personality traits and sociological factors which contributed to the success of my entrepreneurial business. The study will be in the form of an in-depth interview, which will be audio-taped.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question of this project that I consider invasive.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers if I wish to remain anonymous. I understand that only the researchers named above would then have access to the data.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you can contact Darlene Jones at (905)-825-2309 or Professor Mitchell at (905)-688-5550, extension 4413.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available during the month of ?1998. A written explanation will be provided for you upon request.

Thank you for your help! Please take one copy of this form with you for further reference.

****

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How did you get to be an entrepreneur?
2. How do you manage the business?
3. What are the obstacles? How do you handle them?
4. How do you move your business forward?
5. How do you assess the success of the business?
6. What is the relationship of you as a person and you as an entrepreneur?
7. What have been some "memorable moments" in your work? What made them memorable?